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CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY.

James very truly
Robert Cowe

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY:

ITS NATURE AND MEASURE.

BY THE LATE

REV. ROBERT COWE, A.M.,

MINISTER OF FREE ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, AUTHOR OF "NO TRUTH NO LIFE."

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE REV. JAMES FREER,

MINISTER OF FREE ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

THE precipitous coast of Berwickshire is broken by several small streams, that enter the sea through deep hollows and gorges. In the sheltered openings thus formed, there have for ages existed small fishing villages or hamlets. At one of these, called Burnmouth, in the parish of Ayton, and about five miles from the town of Berwick, Robert Cowe was born on the 1st of December 1804.

His father, Mr. Henry Cowe, was a man of marked energy and industry; and finding that the village of Burnmouth did not afford sufficient scope either for his own energy or that of his elder sons, he removed to Berwick, about eighteen months after the date of Robert's birth.

In due time Robert was sent to a dame-school in that town. But when the day came that he was told he must go to school, he showed such a decided disinclination to this proposal that he had to be carried to the schoolroom by force. To him, as to most children, attendance at school seemed an unnatural invasion of the rights of personal freedom. He would much rather have continued to look out from the famous ramparts of the town upon the ever restless sea, or to have played with other children on the

beach. His first protest against school was, however, also the last. He grew as fond of the school as he had been of the sea-shore, and was not long in being promoted to a school of a higher class. Here he distinguished himself by his wonderfully retentive memory and his great decision of character. These qualities attracted the notice of the clergyman who occasionally visited the school, and at his suggestion Robert was sent to the Grammar School, then taught by Mr. Guy Gardiner. Here he soon attained a foremost place, and was a great favourite with the rector. Both the rector of the school and the clergyman already referred to urged Mr. Cowe's parents to send him to College. But as their means were limited this appeared to them to be a very serious proposal. And so, after the close of Mr. Cowe's last session at the Grammar School, things appeared to grow dark around him. He had carried off the highest honours of the school, but these honours could not carry him to College and keep him there. The time for the opening of the College classes was drawing near, but the means seemed hopelessly remote. Thus straitened, Mr. Cowe became depressed in spirits. The lad who had been foremost in his classes and foremost in all out-door games, was now seen to move about like one burdened with cares. On a bright October day he had gone to the top of the "Bell Tower," which commands an extensive view of the sea, and had been revolving in his mind the question as to his future way of life. He had come to the conclusion that henceforth his business should be on the mighty waters. But just as this thought was passing through his mind, a well-known voice was heard to address him

from the foot of the tower. His brother James had been passing at the time, and had been astonished to see him stationed at the top of the tower. He saw also that Robert was greatly depressed in spirits; and as soon as he ascertained the cause, he cheered him by proffering whatever help he might need. The path was now made plain; and by the first week in November, Robert Cowe found himself on the Edinburgh coach, full of hope, and determined to do his best to justify the good opinion which his friends had formed of him, and specially to reward, if possible, the self-denying generosity of his elder brother James, and the other members of the family who assisted him. On arriving at Edinburgh he competed for a "Stewart's Bursary," and, being successful, his mind was relieved from further anxiety regarding support during his first session at College.

Mr. Cowe entered the University of Edinburgh in November 1822, and attended the senior Latin and second Greek classes. In both of these classes he greatly distinguished himself. At the end of the session, Professor Pillans testified that Mr. Cowe "attended the Senior Humanity Class in this University *without missing an hour;* that he engaged in the studies of the class with great zeal, ability, and success, and acquitted himself well when examined on the lessons." Professor Dunbar bore similar testimony as to Mr. Cowe's Greek studies, certifying "that his conduct was uniformly correct, his industry and diligence were unremitting, and that he distinguished himself in no ordinary degree as a Greek scholar, having obtained two prizes, the one for a Greek essay, and the other for general excellence, awarded by the class."

During the three following sessions, which Mr. Cowe attended in regular order, he gained nearly equal distinction in all the classes that he attended. The Professor of Logic was "highly satisfied with Mr. Cowe's diligence and proficiency;" and Professor Wilson wrote that Mr. Cowe "was one of the most regular, attentive, and able students in the Moral Philosophy class" of his year.

Thus passing through the University classes with distinction, Mr. Cowe entered the Divinity Hall of the University in 1826. A difficulty here unexpectedly presented itself. Mr. Cowe had up to this time been a member of the Relief Church at Berwick. He had, however, finally resolved to join the Church of Scotland, and with this view had presented himself for examination by the Presbytery to which he was best known. His examination was declared to be highly satisfactory, and he was furnished with the usual Presbyterial certificate. He carried also, a very satisfactory certificate of moral and religious character from the minister of the Relief Church with which he had been connected. But on presenting the certificate of the Relief minister, the Professor of Divinity refused to receive it. Mr. Cowe was told that he could not be enrolled as a regular student until he produced a certificate from some minister of the Church of Scotland. In these circumstances, the Rev. James Henderson, formerly minister of one of the Presbyterian churches in Berwick, and at that time minister of St. Bernard's Church, Edinburgh, kindly came to the help of Mr. Cowe, and got him tided over the difficulty. Mr. Cowe never forgot this act of kindness, and continued through life to cherish the

greatest regard for his friend, now the Rev. Dr. Henderson, the esteemed and accomplished minister of St. Enoch's Free Church, Glasgow.

In all the classes in the Divinity Hall Mr. Cowe gained distinction. In the Hebrew class he was declared to be the best student of his year, and when in the third year of his Divinity course he attended the lectures of Dr. Chalmers, he engaged in the work of the class with the greatest enthusiasm. In the oral examinations, the Doctor remarked that Mr. Cowe "always acquitted himself in a superior style."

Owing to the distinguished place which Mr. Cowe had taken in all his classes, he had been largely employed as a private tutor. Before entering the Divinity Hall, he had been tutor for some months in the family of the Rev. Dr. Makellar of Pencaitland, who was afterwards Moderator of the General Assembly. After his theological studies were finished, Mr. Cowe presented himself before the Presbytery of Chirnside, and was licensed by them as a preacher of the gospel, about the end of the year 1830. One of the ministers of that Presbytery, the Rev. Adam Landels of Whitsome, then upwards of eighty years of age, was particularly pleased with Mr. Cowe's appearance at his trials for license, and when, some months afterwards, he wanted an assistant, he at once engaged him. This assistantship was held for three months, when a call from the High Presbyterian Church, Berwick, was put in the hands of Mr. Cowe, which, having been accepted, he was ordained in the parish church of Hutton, on the 19th April 1832. There was at that time no Presbytery of

Berwick, so that those called to a Presbyterian church in that town or neighbourhood had to go across the Border for ordination.

On giving up the assistantship at Whitsome, Mr. Landels placed the following testimonial in Mr. Cowe's hands :—

"WHITSOME MANSE, *October* 31, 1832.

"Mr. Robert Cowe has been my assistant for three months, is licentiate of Chirnside Presbytery, where he acquitted himself in a very superior style, and has since preached in the bounds of the Presbytery several times, which has added very much to his fame. He stands very high in my estimation and in that of my people, who will exceedingly regret parting with him; but we must console ourselves with the idea of his being better provided for. I admire the judgment with which he chooses his subjects, the perspicuity of his illustrations, the forcible manner in which he applies them, and the grace and impressiveness of his delivery. From what I know of his principles and practice, I am fully persuaded that, through the Divine aid, he will prove an able, faithful, and diligent labourer in the vineyard of our blessed Lord, and, like a good shepherd, will feed his flock in green pastures, and lead them by still waters, and be an instrument in the hands of the Great Shepherd of guiding them to immortal happiness. From his evangelical doctrine and orthodox views of the gospel, and his extensive information, I can safely recommend him to any congregation over which Providence may appoint him to preside. ADAM LANDELS."

Another member of the same Presbytery, the Rev.

T. S. Goldie, sent the following testimonial to Mr. Cowe:—

"MANSE OF COLDSTREAM.

"Having the pleasure of Mr. Robert Cowe's acquaintance, I cannot deny myself the gratification of expressing the very high opinion which I entertain of his character and acquirements. He is a licentiate of the Presbytery of Chirnside, and the manner in which he acquitted himself in all his examinations left a most favourable impression upon the minds of the members regarding his talents. Indeed, I consider him a young man possessed of the very first abilities, and these being combined with habits of unwearied application, cannot fail to render him an ornament to his profession. He has preached in my church, and the soundness of his views, the plainness of his illustrations, and the earnestness of his manner, rendered him very acceptable to his hearers.

"THOMAS S. GOLDIE."

It will thus be seen that Mr. Cowe commenced his ministry at Berwick supported by the most favourable opinions of all who knew him. He was then in the twenty-eighth year of his age, and was in excellent health, full of spirit, and high in hope. For six years he laboured zealously and successfully in Berwick. The congregation continued to increase steadily in numbers, and many instances occurred in which the preaching of the Word had been greatly blessed. Still, Mr. Cowe was placing himself under many disadvantages when he became a minister in the town in which he had from childhood been brought up. Though he could maintain the respect

due to his office better than most men, and could be frank without being too familiar, yet in the everyday intercourse of life, a prophet who preaches to those of his own town must meet with many things that wound his sensibilities. Former acquaintances are apt to take too great liberties; strangers are apt to think that they are neglected, and look coldly on. In none of Mr. Cowe's letters is there any indication that he felt embarrassed in this way. He seems, on the contrary, to have been of opinion that the proverb about the prophet not being appreciated in his own country did not hold good in his case. His congregation continued to increase in numbers and influence, and he gained the esteem of all classes by his high character and zealous and successful labours. He proved himself to be a workman that needed not to be ashamed.

It was a source of great enjoyment to him during his ministry at Berwick to be on terms of most intimate friendship with the late Rev. Dr. Balmer, minister of the congregation over which the distinguished Dr. John Cairns now presides. Dr. Balmer and Mr. Cowe took frequent walks together, and talked about the books they had been reading. They also generally took tea together once every week, and kept up an animated conversation on literary and theological subjects. There was another thing that linked Mr. Cowe to Berwick: his aged mother was suffering from a mortal malady, and her affectionate son felt it was a privilege to be so near to her that he could visit her daily. He was most unwearied in his kind attentions to her. The proof he gave of the depth of filial affection, and the piety that shone through his sorrow when the hour of bereavement had come, made a strong impression on

the mind of all who witnessed them. Among others thus deeply impressed by what they saw of Mr. Cowe, was Mrs. Wilson of Tweedhouse. This lady was a member of Mr. Cowe's congregation, but having been an invalid for a long time, she had not often enjoyed the privilege of listening to his pulpit ministrations. But he had frequently visited her and conversed with her on religious subjects, and had become a great favourite with her. What she heard of Mr. Cowe's attention to his mother on her deathbed deepened the impression that had previously been produced on her mind. The parish church of Whitsome had just become vacant by the death of the Rev. Adam Landels. Mrs. Wilson's son was the patron, and from the account which she gave her son of Mr. Cowe's talents and character, he felt himself warranted in immediately issuing a presentation in his favour.

As the parishioners had enjoyed the ministrations of Mr. Cowe for three months when he was assistant to the late incumbent, they were in a position to judge of the suitableness of the presentee. Their conduct showed how heartily they welcomed him as their minister, for the call was signed by every member of the church in that parish. The call and presentation were unanimously sustained by the Presbytery, and his induction took place on the 28th of March 1839. On the Sabbath following the induction, Mr. Cowe was introduced to the congregation by the Rev. James Veitch of Galashiels (now the Rev. Dr. Veitch, of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh), for whom till the last he cherished the warmest regard.

The first sermon which Mr. Cowe preached as parish minister of Whitsome was from Romans i. 16,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." A gentleman who was present on that occasion says that the discourse was of a high order, and produced a powerful impression. The audience was thrilled by the closing remarks of the preacher, setting forth his own sense of responsibility in entering upon his labours among them.

There was much in Mr. Cowe's new situation that must have been exceedingly agreeable to his tastes. The parish itself had considerable attractions in respect of its natural features. There were green hills stretching around, clear streams ran through the valleys, and every part of the surrounding country told of Border warfare in days that have long since passed away. From the higher ground in the parish one could see the German Ocean on the one side, and the Tweed on the other. The Cheviot Hills formed the horizon line to the south, and, to the north-west, Dunse Law and the lower ridge of the Lammermuirs rose into view. The population of the parish was small, numbering little more than 600 souls, but it afforded scope enough for carrying on various departments of Christian labour.

Mr. Cowe was no sooner settled as parish minister than he began a course of lectures on the Thursday evenings on the Evidences of Christianity. He was surprised at the large numbers that continued to attend these lectures, and at the great interest manifested in the subjects that were brought under review. Encouraged by this success, he started a few months afterwards a course of lectures on the Shorter Catechism, which were still more largely attended. These

lectures were delivered in the parish schoolroom every Friday evening, and many came from neighbouring parishes to listen to them; nor did the zeal manifested by Mr. Cowe at his settlement suddenly cool. During the four years that he was minister of the parish he continued to labour as he had begun, and, so far from relaxing his efforts, he was ever engaged in devising and carrying out new plans of usefulness. He had a class for religious instruction on the Sunday afternoon, and he had an evening set apart every week for conversing with anxious inquirers. He spent some time also every week in visiting the sick and the afflicted.

It is no wonder that one so devoted to the welfare of his people should have been greatly beloved by them. He gave full proof of his ministry, and the people gave equally full proof of their affectionate regard. No one who left the Established Church at the Disruption carried with him a finer token of regard than that which was paid to Mr. Cowe by a parishioner, who said, "I have buried my father, and I have buried my mother, but your leaving the parish is the sorest trial that I have yet had."

Mr. Cowe, though strongly attached to the principles of the Evangelical party in the Church, and though sympathizing most fully with those who were engaged in defending the principles of non-intrusion and spiritual independence, did not deem it advisable to hold any public meetings in his parish in furtherance of these views. He trusted to his leavening the minds of the people with sound principles in his pulpit ministrations and week-day lectures, so that they would be able to judge for themselves whether

or not the questions at issue involved the maintenance of these principles. He had throughout life a strong dislike to public controversy, believing that very little good ever came of it, while it excited passions and prejudices which are greatly to be deplored. Acting on these convictions, the heat of the Disruption struggle did not lead him to suspend any of the schemes in which he was engaged, that he might more fully indoctrinate the people in the practical bearings of the non-intrusion and spiritual independence principles. He thought that he could most effectually promote the interests of the great cause, by dwelling upon the duty of individuals and nations alike to make the law of Christ their supreme authority. The touchstone by which all principles were to be tried was, in his view, simply this: What is the will of Christ, as that is made known in His Word? At the time that the Convocation assembled in Edinburgh, Mr. Cowe was so unwell as to be unable to carry on his ministerial work. This fact affords a sufficient explanation of his absence from that meeting. But even had he been in perfect health at the time, it is possible that he might have kept aloof, from a fear of committing himself, prematurely as he might think, to any particular course of action. He continued to hope against hope that the Government would concede the non-intrusion and spiritual independence claims; and when the Disruption actually took place, Mr. Cowe waited till Lord Aberdeen's Bill appeared before he left the Establishment. But no sooner had he been convinced, by a careful examination of the provisions of that Bill, that it did not secure those liberties to the Church which

he had hoped it would have secured, than he at once resolved to cast in his lot with those who had signed the Deed of Demission. On the first Sabbath after this resolution was taken, he made the resolution known to his congregation, adding, as one who was present states, "that as he did not think it right to use the property of the Established Church, or his own position as a minister in that Church, for the purpose of making an attack on her, he would not say more from the pulpit on the subject which he had brought before them, but would invite them to meet him on Monday evening at Heriot-Bank, where he would fully explain the reasons which had led him to take the step he had taken." A meeting was accordingly held at Heriot-Bank, in a large barn, on the Monday evening. Many had come from a great distance to attend the meeting; and Mr. Cowe, feeling that this was the last opportunity that he would ever enjoy of addressing so large an audience in that parish, spoke with great emotion, earnestness, and impressiveness. At the close of the meeting he told one of his elders that he had never, during all his ministry, felt so elevated in spirit as he had felt that evening. On the next day he left for Edinburgh, and formally gave in his adherence to the Free Church.

He returned to Whitsome, only to make arrangements for the supply of ordinances to those who adhered to the Free Church. He was convinced that the sparseness of the population in the parish would not warrant the erection of a church there, and advised that those adhering to the Free Church should unite with others in the neighbouring parishes, and erect a church in a locality that might be conveniently

situated for them all. The village of Allanton was ultimately selected as the most suitable place, and, in March 1844, the Rev. John C. Fairbairn was ordained minister of the Free Church there.

Meanwhile Mr. Cowe had been called to Portobello. He entered upon the duties of his new charge with the same unwearying zeal that had previously characterized his ministry. His pulpit ministrations were greatly appreciated, and many testified that the Word spoken came home to their hearts with power. Among others, several young persons were awakened to a deep concern regarding their eternal welfare, and found peace in believing.

While at Portobello, Mr. Cowe gave a proof of self-denying generosity rarely surpassed. A young farmer, who had been an elder in the church at Whitsome, had shown a strong desire for the work of the ministry. His parents could not, however, afford to lose his help in superintending the farming operations, and at the same time send him to College. Mr. Cowe wrote to his friend, saying that if his parents could manage to get over the one difficulty he would undertake to relieve him of the other. The result was, that Mr. Cowe, for two sessions, boarded his friend in his own house at Portobello free of charge, and assisted him regularly in his studies. All this was done so quietly and unobtrusively, that very few ever heard a whisper regarding it. It is due to the Rev. Adam Spence, minister of the Free Church, Houndwood, Berwickshire, to state, that had that gentleman not himself, out of a deep feeling of gratitude to Mr. Cowe, mentioned what is here stated, very few would ever have known of this bright example of Christian

generosity. But this was not the only act of generous friendship which Mr. Cowe performed towards Mr. Spence. That gentleman some years ago being in a delicate state of health, and unable to visit the families in the remoter districts of his parish, found one morning a boy standing at the manse-door with a pony, which Mr. Spence was to receive as a present from a friend. Who that friend was no one could tell. But it is now known that this gift came from the same friend that had shown such regard for Mr. Spence when prosecuting his studies for the ministry. Mr. Spence has proved himself well worthy of all the confidence and regard that Mr. Cowe entertained for him, being greatly esteemed by all who know him as an efficient and zealous minister—a man of deep piety, and of transparent integrity of character.

In the autumn of 1845, Mr. Cowe received a call from St. Andrew's Presbyterian church, Manchester, and was settled there in the month of November. He had a short time before got a call to Dublin, which he declined. When settled in Manchester, Mr. Cowe carried on the same kind of work that he had done in his previous charges. He held numerous meetings with the young men belonging to his congregation, and took a great interest in the prosperity of the "Young Men's Christian Association" of Manchester. It was at the request of this Association that he delivered several lectures on subjects connected with the moral and religious tendencies of the age. One of these, an admirable discourse on the "Progress of Society," is reprinted in the present volume. Mr. Cowe started a district mission in Greenheys, which proved to be a great blessing to

the district. The following extracts from the note-book of one of the visitors, will show what kind of work was done:—

"Visited Mrs. P. She told me there had been a great change in her husband since he began to go to the meetings. Before, when any of the children crossed him, he was ready with a curse and a blow; but now there 's nothing of that kind."

"Sarah W. says she is surprised at the change in her sister, for nothing now seems to trouble her."

"Mrs. L. says no one, unless they lived in the house with her husband, could believe the change that had been made on him by attending these meetings. 'There 's a great change in this house,' she said, 'and I feel there will be more yet.'"

"Betsy M. is under deep convictions of sin. 'Oh how thankful should I be,' she said, 'that a wretch like me is out of hell. Sometimes when I am praying I feel my heart so hard, but I pray and pray till God softens it. I rose from my knees and opened the Bible, and what should I read but 'Ye must be born again'?"

"Some of the people, when they began to attend the meetings, could read but very imperfectly, but though very poor they have made exertions to get Bibles, and have by practice so much improved as to be able to read with pleasure. Others who could not read at all are now learning. One pays a man to teach him, another is taught by his wife, and a third is helped to spell out his words by his child, who is attending our night-school."

Such facts as these prove that the district mission was successful. Mr. Cowe's own congregation was

also in a flourishing condition, and everything seemed to hold out the prospect of a long and successful ministry in this new field of labour. Mr. Cowe's friends were therefore greatly surprised when he resigned his charge in November 1848, having been scarcely three years settled in Manchester. The cause of this was, it is understood, some kind of estrangement of feeling between him and some of his copresbyters. Mr. Cowe was peculiarly sensitive; and this extreme delicacy of sensibility caused the slightest jar to fret and wound his spirit.

Leaving Manchester, Mr. Cowe returned to Scotland, and, after spending some weeks with friends, went to Edinburgh, and undertook the management of Lady Effingham's mission. He had only been a few months in Edinburgh when he received a call from St. Stephen's Free Church, Glasgow, and was inducted to the pastorate of that congregation in June 1849. This was the fifth charge to which he had been appointed, and it was destined to be the last.

On coming to Glasgow, Mr. Cowe had to contend with many difficulties.[1] By a decision of the Court of Session, the *quoad sacra* chapel of St. Stephen's was taken from the Free Church and handed over to the Establishment, and for more than a year Mr. Cowe had to meet his congregation in the Hall of the Free Church Normal Seminary. This unlooked-for trial weighed heavily upon his spirits, and considerably injured his health. An affection of the liver greatly restrained his wonted energy, and, by the time the

[1] A few sentences here, are taken from a notice of Mr. Cowe (by the writer of this memoir) which appeared in the *Edinburgh Daily Review*.

handsome church in the New City Road was opened, the feeling of novelty which draws a crowd around the newest preacher had passed away. Enfeebled health also prevented Mr. Cowe taking a prominent place in the business of the Presbytery.

But though from these and other reasons his ministry in Glasgow did not attract so much attention as it had done in all the other places in which he had been settled, yet it was far from being an unsuccessful ministry. After eighteen years' ministry, he left the communion-roll greatly larger than it had been at his settlement. The contributions of the congregation for all objects, general and local, had averaged about £1000 a year.

Those who waited on Mr. Cowe's ministry prized it very highly. His pulpit discourses were always carefully prepared, and displayed a refined taste and vigorous understanding. Both his taste and judgment led him to avoid everything approaching the sensational, but underneath all that might appear formal or too refined in his style, there was the glow of deep piety, and the earnestness of one who was alive to the importance of the message which he had to proclaim. Anxious inquirers found light falling on their path, and believers were edified. Mr. Cowe was also greatly esteemed as a pastor. Few men possessed such tact in introducing religious subjects in his visits to the families of his congregation, and when he was called to visit the sick or to speak words of comfort to the sorrowing, his own deep devotional spirit threw a peculiar charm over all that he uttered.

From a certain ardour and impulsiveness of temperament, as well as from a kind of morbid sensitiveness

and self-consciousness, the first impression which Mr. Cowe made upon strangers was not so favourable, as an impression formed from a fuller acquaintance always produced. He was a man that required to be intimately known before his character and worth could be rightly appreciated; but when thus known, no man was better fitted to retain his hold on the affectionate regard of his friends. There was something so genuine and so generous, so straightforward and so unselfish in his whole bearing, that men felt, the more they came in contact with him, as if they held converse with one, whose stamp of character reminded them of the high and heroic virtue of some of the ancient prophets.

At the time of the revival in the North of Ireland, Mr. Cowe paid a visit to that country, and was greatly interested in what he saw. Before he set out he told a friend that he was going to Ireland "to get his torch lighted," and when he returned he was so full of unction and energy, that his people thought he had succeeded in the object of his visit. In the letters which he sent to friends at the time, he asserted that he had never seen such groups of happy faces anywhere as among the converts at some of the meetings which he had attended.

In the summer of 1865 he made a tour on the Continent for the first time, in company with three clerical friends. Though the oldest of the party, he was not the least youthful in spirit. After visiting the most interesting places in Belgium, the party proceeded up the Rhine as far as Bingen, and thence by rail to Frankfort. From Frankfort they proceeded to Eisenach for the sake of visiting the Wartburg Castle.

The next stage was to Wittenberg, the place above all others that is most intimately connected with the name of Martin Luther. Berlin, Dresden, Prague, and Munich were visited in succession; and after crossing the Lake of Constance they entered the classic land of the Swiss, visiting all the places of greatest interest along the line of the Bernese Oberland. At Neufchâtel two of the party returned home, while Mr. Cowe and the Rev. Dr. A. S. Patterson of Hutchesontown Free Church, Glasgow, proceeded to Geneva. The following extract from a letter received from my accomplished friend, the Rev. Dr. Patterson, will give a good idea of the enjoyment Mr. Cowe felt in surveying the sublime scenery of the country:—

"Leaving you and our other fellow-traveller, Mr. Cowe and I proceeded towards Chamouni and Mont Blanc—scenery with which I was myself familiar, but which he had never visited, and now intensely desired to see. Yverdun, where Pestalozzi, that eccentric but philanthropic educationist, had lived; beautiful Lausanne, the interior of whose ancient cathedral Mr. Cowe admired for its graceful and grand simplicity; those delightful spots, Vevay, Clarens, Montreux, and the grotesque old town of St. Maurice—all arrested his attention and secured his interest on our way to Martigny. But it was from the hour when we left it, mounted on our mules, to proceed by the Tête Noire to Chamouni, till that when we again reached Martigny on our return by the Col de Balme, from that glorious glen, that his enthusiastic admiration of the sublime in scenery most vividly expressed itself, in so far as my own converse with him on the subject was concerned. Certain architectural structures, of fine proportions and elaborate beauty, some natural scenery of soft, luxuriant loveliness, and a few places which depended entirely for their interest and attraction on associations with famous historic names and deeds, had obviously failed to inspire his

mind with any special admiration and delight. But no sooner had we begun to climb the ascent from Martigny towards the Pass of the Tête Noire, than, as Wordsworth speaks, 'it was witnessed through his eye that the power of hills was on him.' Narrow and even dangerous tracks we had to follow; and the mules, with all their steadiness of foot, were but lagging travellers. But the woods, the glens, the glaciers, the aiguilles, and Mont Blanc in his stately majesty, enchanted him; and on the day when we left Chamouni, he rose early to see the morning light kindling up the snowy heights, and afterwards, on reaching the summit of the Col de Balme, continued gazing in silent rapture, first on the mountain scenery we had left behind, and then on the green and pastoral Valais shut in by a glorious range of hills, including Jungfrau, Grimsel, and Finster-aarhorn. The devout spirit which he carried along with him in his travels led him to acknowledge the Great Father-Spirit in connexion with the Alpine scenery through which we passed. The Gorge de Trient, a far-extending fissure among lofty crags, in the neighbourhood of Martigny, produced a powerful impression on his mind; and that natural phenomenon, which the traveller is so apt to pass unvisited, is one of the most curious, and not one of the least solemnizing objects in that mountain region. 'Lake Leman wooed us with its crystal face;' and, as we sped from end to end of that lovely lake, Mr. Cowe, according to his wont, while enjoying the scenery, sought, in converse with his fellow-travellers, to add to his stores of local and general knowledge. His visit to Geneva, the first and last which he ever paid to that venerable city, suggested to him many honoured names in connexion with his favourite science of theology. The house, the church, and the supposed grave of the illustrious Calvin, were among the objects in the city which commanded his special interest. It was to be regretted that he omitted to accompany me on my visit to the ancient library founded by Bonnivard, where I had the pleasure of inspecting manuscripts in the handwriting of Luther, Calvin, Beza, Farel, Voltaire, Rousseau, and several other men of high literary or theological distinction. Our journey from Geneva to Paris was very tedious, and in general uninteresting. In the latter city, which, like

Geneva, was new to him, he saw much in a little time. While arrested by the gorgeous grandeur of the French metropolis, and gratified by his visits to the Louvre, the Palace of Versailles, and other attractive places in the city and its neighbourhood, he was habitually introducing into his conversation on this occasion, expressions of regret and moral indignation at the sensual indulgences and the fashionable frivolities so rife, as he thought, among the gay Parisians. He acknowledged to me that, at one of the places to which I accompanied him in Paris—the little chapel erected on the spot where Ferdinand, Duke of Orleans, died in 1842—he was almost melted into tears; and truly, the pathetic picture in that chapel of the solemn death-scene might well have moved a less sensitive heart than his. On our homeward way we had a stormy passage across the Channel, and spent some pleasant hours in London.

"I feel as if it were scarcely worth while to send you this little detail, but it associates itself, to my own mind, with the memory of a man who, though he occasionally exhibited a certain susceptibility of personal feeling which was apt to cast a shadow over the finer features of his character, was remarkable for his clear judgment, his extensive information, his studious habits, his intellectual tastes, his domestic affections, his devout feelings, his Christian honour, and his pastoral zeal.—Yours affectionately, ALEX. S. PATTERSON.

"Rev. JAMES FREER."

Mr. Cowe returned from his Continental tour in great spirits. What he had seen and heard formed a fertile theme of conversation for many a day. The recollection, especially of the Swiss scenery, was a source of constant enjoyment. He resolved again to visit that country the next summer, but owing to the breaking out of the war in Germany and Northern Italy, he was reluctantly forced to abandon the idea of visiting Switzerland that summer. He hoped, however, to be able to accomplish this in the summer of 1867. But before that season came round, his

health had given way. Instead of travelling under the shadow of the everlasting hills, he was already within the edge of that valley through whose dark shadow we are all destined one day to pass.

In the second week of January 1867 Mr. Cowe was seized with bronchitis. From the first hour that he was stricken down he had the presentiment that it was the beginning of the end. Still, as the doctors entertained a favourable view of his case, he hoped that with the return of spring there might come some return of strength. Early in February he removed to the Bridge of Allan, but not finding any improvement from the change, he returned to town in about two weeks from the time he had left it. Things began now to grow darker. His strength began rapidly to decline. An oppressive cough, accompanied by expectoration, showed that the lungs were affected. In the month of April he removed to the hydropathic establishment at Rothesay. Here he thought for a while he was getting somewhat better; but an attack of pleurisy brought on increased weakness and prostration. He then removed to a villa at Row, hoping that the mildness of the climate would do him good. Again his hopes were doomed to disappointment. The cough continued as oppressive as before; his pulse was high, and his strength diminished apace. In the month of June he went to Edinburgh to consult Sir James Simpson. Sir James, after a careful examination, told Mr. Cowe that his case was a very serious one, but that a change to some hill district, such as Crieff or Comrie, might possibly be of benefit.

Mr. Cowe was deeply impressed by the extreme

kindness of Sir James. That distinguished physician kept him for several days in his own house, as if he had been a member of his own family, and did all that the highest medical skill could suggest to allay the violent fits of coughing to which his patient was subject.

Writing to Mrs. Cowe stating the results of the doctor's examination, and breathing sentiments of deepest gratitude for all the kindness he had received, Mr. Cowe goes on to say in his letter :—

"Now, my dear Hannah, this intelligence will be far more unexpected and startling to you than to me, as you are aware that from the first I had an impression that my lungs were affected. But I hope that by faith in Jesus Christ, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, by filial submission to the will of our heavenly Father, and love to each other, our cross will be lightened, though not removed. No little goodness and mercy followed me in my visit to Edinburgh. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

The faith and submission to the will of God of which he here speaks, shone brightly during the whole period of his illness. He was ever ready to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

His stay at Comrie was attended with no improvement in his health. He became so weak that he feared he would not be able to return to his own house. When at length, towards the end of September, he got home, every earthly wish seemed to be satisfied. He felt himself to be a dying man, and spoke to the friends who visited him with the solem-

nity, and yet with the composure and peace of one who stood on the borders of the spirit-land. He greatly delighted in the prayers of the friends who visited him. A few verses from the Gospels, and occasionally a psalm, were read to him, and this he also greatly enjoyed. A hymn-book lay on a little table beside his bed, with the leaf folded down at the following hymn :—

"O Thou! whose tender feet have trod
The thorny path of woe,
Forbid that I should slight the rod,
Or faint beneath the blow.

My spirit to its chastening stroke
I meekly would resign;
Nor murmur at the heaviest yoke
That tells me I am thine.

Give me the spirit of thy trust
To suffer as a son—
To say, though lying in the dust,
My Father's will be done!

I know that trial works for ends
Too high for sense to trace,
That oft in dark attire He sends
Some embassy of grace.

May none depart till I have gained
The blessing which it bears,
And learn, though late, I entertained
An angel unawares.

So shall I bless the hour that sent
The mercy of the rod,
And build an altar by the tent
Where I have met with God."

In this beautiful hymn (written by the late Rev. J. D. Burns of Hampstead, himself at the time it was

written in the valley of the shadow of death) Mr. Cowe felt that there was a full expression of his own desires, and therefore he sought almost daily to give utterance to these desires by reading it, or hearing it read. On Sabbath the 20th of October he felt that his hour was come. Part of the 14th chapter of John having been read to him at his own request, he spoke a word or two of the glory of Christ as a Saviour, and then having embraced his two children and told them that he was going to the Father's house, and that he hoped that they would be kind and obedient to their mother, he lay down in sweet composure. At this moment the writer of this notice happened to call, and being recognised by Mr. Cowe, he was asked to engage in prayer. At the end of the prayer Mr. Cowe repeated, with marked emphasis, "Amen," and, after uttering a few indistinct words about the home in the Father's house, gently fell asleep in Jesus.

Mr. Cowe was throughout life distinguished by great singleness of aim. A kind of inflexible integrity and uprightness distinguished him from his very boyhood. When at school his teacher declared that he never knew of his telling a single falsehood. Whatever the consequences might be, he would always maintain the truth; and when he was settled as parish minister of Whitsome, an incident occurred that showed how the qualities displayed by the boy still dwelt in the man. At a dinner-party some of the heritors of the parish began to indulge in profane swearing. Mr. Cowe rose and left the room without assigning any reason for his doing so; but after he had left, some of the company began to speak about

the probable reason that had led to his leaving. All agreed that the profane swearing had been the cause, and, strangely enough, all united in declaring that they held the minister in greater esteem because of what he had done. They thought he had acted rightly in leaving the company of men who had been taking the name of that Master in vain whom the minister professed to love and serve. The consequence was, that they apologized for what they had done, and invited Mr. Cowe to meet them again, that he might see how much they had profited by his quiet rebuke.

Along with this integrity of purpose and high sense of duty, Mr. Cowe manifested a scorn of everything of a mean or equivocal kind. His soul loathed every kind of time-serving policy, because, to his eyes, it appeared inconsistent with Christian faithfulness and moral integrity. He had himself a kind of heroic enthusiasm for whatever he believed to be truth and right, and an equally strong detestation of everything that appeared to compromise the claims of duty.

These feelings were nourished by a habitual and devout study of the Word of God. Whether at home in the bosom of his own family, or travelling in quest of health or recreation, he never omitted fixed times for devout meditation and prayer. When in the summer of 1865 he spent some weeks in Germany and Switzerland in the company of three clerical friends, he always retired early in the evening for meditation and prayer in his own room; and at however early an hour the party might have arranged to start the following morning, he rose an hour earlier, that his devotional exercises might not in any way be

interfered with. When standing one bright afternoon in the Schloss Kirche at Wittenberg beside the grave of Martin Luther, he remained for some minutes silent, while his friends were talking over some of the more remarkable events in the life of the illustrious Reformer. At length Mr. Cowe spoke in a tone that showed how deeply he was moved. "Don't you think, friends," he said, "that it would now be becoming in us, standing by the grave of Luther, to thank God for the great things which He enabled His servant to do?" The friends approved of the suggestion, and, standing on the one side of the grave, Mr. Cowe led their devotions.

We close this brief memoir of a man greatly beloved, by giving a few sentences from the conclusion of the funeral sermon, which it fell to the writer to preach, in St. Stephen's Free Church :—

"Mr. Cowe was endowed with excellent natural gifts, distinguished in early life as a successful student, and retaining till the close of his ministry the same love for study, and the same capacity for carrying it on. In his minute and extensive acquaintance with general literature he had few superiors, and could at any time give a full and accurate account of any work that he had read.

"In the study of subjects bearing more directly upon the work of the ministry he was most painstaking. He would often spend more than an hour in tracing all the varieties of meaning in some single word in the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures. But all this labour was cheerfully undertaken. And although in his case, as in the case of all who prosecute similar inquiries, the results reached might sometimes seem disproportioned to the labour expended in arriving at them, yet this careful examination of the words of Scripture must often have thrown much light upon many a text, and given singular freshness and fulness to his preaching. What his pulpit ministrations were, you, of course, know better than I can

do; but I cannot doubt that you enjoyed a great privilege in listening to his expositions of Divine truth, and that you now rightly estimate the responsibility under which the enjoyment of that privilege placed you. I trust that, though the lips of the preacher have been sealed in death, the memory of his words will be fresh in your minds many days hence. And I believe that the great day of revelation will make known that he neither laboured in vain nor prayed in vain. This much is certain, that he had most profoundly at heart your eternal interests; that he was willing to spend and be spent in your behalf, and that all his work ever had in view the salvation of the souls committed to his charge.

"He had himself long known and felt the power of the truth, and with ripening experience his heart glowed with increasing love to the Saviour. In the atonement of Christ he placed all his hopes for eternity, and you know how fully he placed the doctrine of Christ's vicarious sacrifice before you in his preaching, as the foundation of all Christian doctrine, and the source of all Christian life. All his preaching revolved round this central doctrine, and from it he drew motives to the practice of faith and love and obedience.

"Sound in the faith, he was liberal in his views of others. He was ready to acknowledge all who loved the Lord, and held by the great vital doctrines of the faith, as brethren in Christ. And though no man was ever more uncompromising in matters of principle, he was far from arrogating to the church to which he belonged, or to any other branch of the Christian church, a monopoly of grace and truth. He had learned better of the Master than to indulge in any such narrow-minded sectarianism.

"What he was in his daily walk amongst you—how conscientious, how faithful, and how sympathizing—it is not for me to speak. You know best, and I have no doubt feel most warmly, that in the loss of your pastor you have truly lost a friend.

"And now that he is gone, let the recollection of all that by God's blessing he was enabled to do and to live amongst you, stimulate you to redeem the time, and to press on with greater zeal in the path of life. Brethren, the time is short, short at the longest; for life is but a hurrying on to death. The valley of death's shadow must soon be entered by all of

us. But when that solemn hour draws near, when all earthly things fade away from the view, and the light of the eternal world shall break in upon us, may it be ours to hear the voice of the risen Saviour saying to us as he did to John: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.' Amen."

THE

GIFT AND THE GAUGE.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

CHAPTER I.

MATT. XXV. 14. LUKE XIX. 12.

In this parable we have a picture of Christ, and of the solemn relation in which He stands to His people, and to all mankind. In the prospect of His departure from this world, He sets before His disciples, and all who will hear His voice, their responsibility to Him for the exercise of their various gifts. Not a link of the chain that binds them to Him can be broken. He is over them; and no power can depose Him from his throne, or absolve them from the allegiance they owe Him. Though soon to be out of sight, He should never be out of mind; for His authority over them will never be suspended. He is going away; but He will come again, and will reckon with them, from the least even to the greatest. All, therefore, should watch

and work; and be as faithful to their trust in His absence, as if they saw Him visibly superintending them in their various spheres of action; for the day is coming when they must all appear in His presence, and give in their account.

I. Our Lord a Nobleman.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country." Matt. xxv. 14. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Luke xix. 12. The nobleman is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God was of the most distinguished descent. As a man He was of royal extraction, and could point to David as His progenitor; and, as the Son of the Highest, divinity was stamped upon His character, and He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. The rank of the most illustrious on earth grows pale in the presence of the Prince of peace. Trace the most noble lines back to their origin; and they lose themselves in the obscurity of the past. Some man of mark stepped forward from the crowd; won himself a name; and became the founder of a kingly house. "His gift made room for him;" the hand of the Creator marked him for authority, and distinction; and his fellow-men acknowledged the sign, and hailed him as their king. But go beyond him, and all is dark. The founder of the princely family looms in

the distance like a beacon-light; but beyond that shining light nothing is visible. The roots of the majestic tree are hidden in the soil. The magnificent river, on whose bosom a proud navy floats,—the highway of a nation's wealth,—the great artery through which a nation's life-blood flows,—commences at its source among the mountains, an insignificant stream. And the proudest head that wears a crown, the noblest family in whose veins the blood of warriors and statesmen, orators and martyrs, flows, sprung originally from the common stock of humanity, without an honour to adorn their brow. How little are the great ones of the earth, compared with Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person; and to whom every knee shall bow! They are but tapers to the mid-day Sun. They must cast their crowns at His feet, and prostrate themselves before Him. He must increase; they must decrease. Their light is borrowed, but His is His own. "They are of the earth, earthy; but He is the Lord from heaven."

Worldly grandeur and state would have been out of keeping with the spiritual greatness of Jesus Christ. Earthly splendour and imperial power, would have dazzled the eyes of the beholders, and obscured the lustre of His character. Lowliness of condition, and poverty of garb, best became the Possessor of such peerless excellence; that nothing might be ascribed to the influence of

wealth, or rank, or power; and that His Divine nobility might shine through His plain exterior in simple and unmixed beauty. He was above the world; in it, but not of it; and therefore He could not consistently borrow any thing from its fleeting glory. Had He arrayed Himself in its magnificence, it would have been mingling iron and clay with pure gold. A gaudy setting would have ill consorted with a jewel of such exquisite beauty. He was noble in love; sublime in meekness and humility; glorious in holiness; princely in munificence; kingly in mercy; and great in calm fixedness of purpose, and singleness of aim for the glory of God, and the salvation of man. He seemed never to think of Himself; but His heart glowed with a self-denying fervour for the good of others. Love made Him oblivious of personal comfort. He was a daily sacrifice to God for man. Nothing could divert Him from His purpose of mercy. The basest ingratitude, and the deepest injuries, could not quench the ardour of His love. Had the world not been blind, it would have risen up as one man, to pay homage to One whose empire is grace and truth: who in His triumphs sheds no blood but His own; who conquers by kindness; and whose crown is wreathed with mercy. His domain of glory was of the highest order. His distinctions, His conquests, His splendours had no need of carnal honours and decorations. "Jesus

Christ," says Pascal, "without worldly possessions, or scientific eminence, has His own peculiar sanctity. To the internal eye of the heart, to the discernment of true wisdom, how illustrious was the pomp of His appearance, and how unspeakable His greatness!"

Let not envy, however, blind us to the claims of the nobles of this world; or to the wise purposes subserved by them in the economy of Divine Providence. Gradations in society are absolutely indispensable to its welfare, and to the healthy play of its spontaneous development. A dead level, a dull uniformity, would be moral death; and prove fatal to the finest manifestations of human progress. It would crucify energy; impose a heavy tax upon skill; and stereotype what is common-place. It would stifle aspirations after excellence; give the bread of the industrious to the idle; mock the hopes of genius; and award the prizes of life to the dunces of the earth. Robbed of its reward, enterprise would sleep; and the great springs of improvement and activity would be relaxed, and put out of joint. The prospect of passing upward in the scale of society applies the spur to many a man, whose mind would otherwise rust. Possessing a guarantee that the fruit of his mental and bodily toil will be secured to himself and his family, the hope of winning his way to a more honourable position, and

drawing them after him, nerves his arm; and makes toil a pleasure. And though many of those who occupy the loftier eminences of society forget the responsibility of their high station; and are ignoble in spirit, amid all the emblazonry of rank, and the glittering trappings of power; yet are there not a few who shed a benignant and elevating influence on all around them. The gracefulness of their demeanour, the refinement of their taste, and the affability of their spirit, help to restrain the vulgar grossness, and incivility, which disfigure our age. "Be courteous," is a command of God; and we can ill spare the want of any element which goes to foster a spirit that renders human intercourse a source of pleasure and improvement; grafts the rose upon the prickly thorn; and entwines the sweet flowers of gentle affection and kindness around the sturdy trunk of personal independence.

Persons of rank and wealth have very favourable opportunities for improvement, usefulness, and distinction; and if true to the spirit that should animate their station, they may prove honoured pioneers in the noblest of all paths,—the path of truth, righteousness, and love. Condescension is noticed, and gratefully acknowledged, and acts as an encouragement to those who occupy a lower station. What the high in station say and do on the side of justice and benevolence, goes

a great way, and comes recommended by a potent charm. Thus, with their means, and leisure, and commanding position, they may be centres of light and love, stimulating the indolent; restraining the ungodly; helping the weak; lifting up and comforting the sad; and, with little effort, may diffuse around them a pure and warm influence of intelligence and love. They are the better of such efforts themselves. They receive in giving; they learn by teaching; they are helped by helping; and while imitating their heavenly Father, who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, He is not unmindful of them, but pours His blessings abundantly into their bosom. The humbler classes are their benefactors by drawing forth their better feelings; and by presenting a field for the benevolent exercise of their heads and hearts. And most gracefully does kindness sit on the brow, and beam forth in the eyes, and speak by the tongues, and work by the hands, of such well doers. It gives true dignity to their character; throws a mild halo around their names; and adds a new honour to their scutcheon.

Such persons are placed in an elevated position from their birth. They start in the race of life under favourable auspices. Many of their names are associated with heroic deeds and immortal exploits, and are embalmed in the glory of the past. Their rank inspires respect; if they do not forfeit

their title to honour by misconduct: and it is their own fault when they do not exercise a powerful and salutary influence upon the commonwealth, and their voices are not heard with attention in the councils of the nation. But the great truth is struggling for utterance in thousands of breasts,—that mere birth and affluence form no adequate title to pre-eminence. Capacity and worth are loudly called for; and many hands are ready to put the crown of honour on the head of the man whom God has richly endowed and adorned. His gifts and graces are his passport. Woe to the land that keeps him down, and will not receive the services he is fitted to render! God made him for dominion, and pre-eminence; and he will exercise his power in wisdom and love. He is God's man, and God's choice; and the talents with which he is endowed, and the virtues that beautify his character, are his recommendation, signed by the Divine hand that formed him, and that sent him to benefit his race. He has a word to say, and a work to do: let the crowd of competitors open, and make way for that kingly spirit who was made for dominion. He was not "born great," but, as God's instrument, he will "achieve greatness."

Christianity, which teaches us to honour all men, fosters this growing spirit, that looks through the outward drapery and accidental appendages of a

man, and weighs the life and power that reign within him. The Gospel stamps a peculiar value on the individual. In its balance a single soul outweighs a world. While proclaiming man's guilt and wretchedness, it unfolds his dignity. It shows us his greatness in his littleness. It calls forth in him a sense of personal responsibility, and invites him to be reconciled to God, and walk with Him as a friend Before such influence, the fleeting and conventional distinctions of the world fade like a vision of the night. The image of Christ, great in poverty, noble in weakness, with the largest and purest human heart, deals a heavy blow at all glory which has not a basis of goodness and truth to rest upon. His religion looks below the surface ; and seeks nobility in the heart. It digs the grave, and rings the knell, of all hollow, formal, unreal grandeur. It tears off every painted mask. It shows us that a man is not to be embalmed and dressed up as a mummy ; or moved as a machine ; and that the promise of the outward condition is but a mockery, when it is not the symbol and the index of the Divine. Rotten pillars are not strengthened by external gilding. A coat of paint, and a bright inscription, will not stop the dry rot. The noble in spirit must animate the noble in birth, if the former is to command profound veneration and respect. After a sight of the Sun of righteousness, the brightest

earthly lights look dim and pale. Great is the responsibility of those whose station places them aloft before the public eye. Let them live as those who feel that they are immortal and accountable beings; that they were not made to glitter in vanity, and sport away their precious hours in fashionable trifling; that they were placed on high, not to corrupt others, but to elevate and ennoble them. Let them take the lead in works of faith and labours of love, as God's almoners to the needy, and His teachers of the ignorant; let them exchange the sentimental and artistic in religion, for the deep-toned, and vital, and self-denying; and a protecting influence will arise around them more secure than all human defences; and good wishes will follow them at every step; and the blessings of thousands will descend upon their heads: their names will be associated with the highest of all honours; and fresh laurels will be woven around their brows. Let them be fruitful trees, planted by the streams of the water of life, and having their roots deep in the soil of Christ's heart;—objects of beauty, and sources of health and strength; and not an axe will be lifted up to hew them down; but many will delight to sit under their shadow, and thank God for their shelter and their fruit.

Let us not forget, then, that there are other nobles besides those of rank and wealth. There is

the nobility of intellect, the aristocracy of talent; who, though not distinguished by outward condition, yet by power of thought overtop their fellows, and move among them like Saul among the people. They bear the stamp of superiority in mental wealth and power. They are the rulers of the world of thought, and, by the force of truth, and the magic of their eloquence, often make the most powerful quail. Abuses are battered down by the fire of their artillery, and by their seasonable and effective advocacy good measures are introduced. No doubt, too many of them betray their trust, and employ their noble gifts in a bad cause; sowing the seeds of error; maligning and caricaturing truth; perverting the minds of ardent youth; striking with a poisoned dagger at the very heart of the nation; instead of binding up our wounds. But there are splendid exceptions. Our intellectual nobles do a good work in their day; and live in their works after the place that has known them shall know them no more. Though dead they speak; and sometimes only begin to receive their due meed of honour, when their memory is committed to the care of posterity, and they have left the world that was not worthy of them. Their writings are a part of our wealth, the loss of which would leave us poor indeed. Their thoughts that breathe, and their words that burn, form the mental treasure of the reading and

reflective; and help to elevate their character, refine their taste, and enrich their enjoyment. The better part of our unrivalled literature is a mighty educator of the national mind; and fills many a vacant hour with affluent thought; sends many a glorious flash of light into opening minds; and makes many a heart beat high with the love of truth, and the hope of excellence. Not a few have awaked to life by reading the work of a master mind. The chrysalis has burst under the genial and quickening influence; and the winged soul, conscious of new powers, and instinct with new desires, has escaped from its dark prison, and soared into a region of light, and life, and beauty. Besides, regenerative influences flow down from those gifted thinkers, through the medium of persons who read them, to those who never glowed and brightened over their radiant pages. Many of their happy thoughts and expressions become part of the current coin of the realm. They pass from mouth to mouth, and are interwoven with the framework of our ideas, and give their colour to our feelings; even when their authors are unknown, and we cannot trace them to their source. They float about the mental atmosphere, like seeds wafted by the winds; and drop into the soil, and germinate, and flourish, far from the spot where the parent-plant grew. One sows and another reaps; and many glean in the fields of those sow-

ers of truth, who are ignorant of the very names of the benefactors whose bread they are eating. We may well look back on the bright array of their illustrious names with gratitude to God for so precious a gift. They are our companions in solitude; our guides in perplexity; our comforters in sorrow. They provide a feast for us when we have little else to regale us. Their memories are embalmed in their productions; and eclipse and outlive all the honours of rank and office. No coronet can vie with the distinction of a Bacon, a Milton, or a Cowper. They shine in the firmament of mind, when badges of artificial honour fade away. They are our pioneers in the march of thought; and some of them with trumpet-tongue, and others with more sweet and gentle strains, summon us to gird ourselves; and they gallantly lead us on to take part in the great battle of life.

We have another class of nobles, in those who are eminent for piety; who lay their gifts on the altar of God, and consecrate them to His service. The first name, in the order of time, that appears in this sacred roll, is Abel. Though a shepherd, he was a prince that had power with God. All who have walked in his steps have been kings and priests unto God. They are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. How sad would have been the state of the world without them!

Corruption would have spread like a leprosy from pole to pole; and another deluge of water, or of fire, would have swept our heaven-defying race away. They have stood in the breach in dark days of trial. For the sake of ten righteous men, many a Sodom has been spared. With their censers of holy fire, and intercession, they have stood between the living and the dead, and stayed the plague. It is the nobles of the land that surround the throne and have easiest access to the ear of royalty; and the nobles of faith, and love, and humility, have ever liberty of admission to the presence of the King of kings, and procure from Him many blessings for their fellow-men. They draw nigh, and enjoy His loving fellowship; while others stand afar off, and are strangers to His favour. They are much at the throne of grace, and have all the privileges of the King's children. Their patent of nobility is the new birth,—their adoption into the family of God. They have "the white stone, with a new name written thereon; which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it."

Christ is the Head of this order of nobility; and the meanest on earth may be promoted to the spiritual rank which He adorns. He is the Founder of a race of kings and princes who shall reign with Him for ever and ever. The first Adam has been stripped of his titles, and deprived of his in-

heritance; and all his children have been outlawed with him; but the second Adam has won by His merits the highest honours. He is exalted, a Prince and a Saviour; and all who are united to Him by faith, and who overcome, shall sit down with Him upon His throne. They become His brethren, and are treated as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Their names are written in the Book of life. They are watched over here by the sleepless eye of parental love; and they have a place ready in heaven to receive them when they die. They belong to the royal family of God. Let us all aspire to this nobility! We cannot all possess genius, and belong to the aristocracy of mind; for this is a rare gift, and bestowed upon few. We cannot climb to the giddy heights of ducal splendour; but the nobility of grace is before us, and at this we should aim. And, whatever may be our position in society, if we cherish the graces of the spirit, we shall possess those sentiments and feelings which constitute nobility of mind, and may be cultivated under any garb. The king's daughter is all glorious within. It is the soul that makes the man; and where the image of God is, there is true excellence. The actor puts off the dress in which he personates the character of a king, and all his imaginary glory is gone: and at death all shall be stripped of their outward trappings; and those

alone shall stand the trial, and have their best treasure untouched, in whose breasts beats the spirit of adoption, and who can still say in faith, and love, and joy, Abba, Father.

II. Our Lord's Departure to a far country.

This is a parabolic description of our Lord's personal withdrawal from the world, when He ascended to heaven. The expression "far country" is not designed to throw any light on the locality of heaven; it is simply employed to convey the idea of the Divine Master's absence,—that the servants, deprived of visible superintendence, may have their faithfulness and sense of responsibility fully tested. We know not where the throne of the Eternal God is; where the glorified Son sits in human form at the right hand of the Father; but we know that all personal intercourse between Christ and the world is suspended, till He shall come in great power and glory to demand of us an account of our stewardship. That country is so far away that we cannot reach it in the body; it does not lie within the confines of our globe; and yet it is so near, that in spirit we can shake hands with its inmates, and have our conversation in heaven, while treading the dusty soil of the earth. But no visible signals are made from the one region to the other. A veil is drawn over the wonders of that glorious land. Jesus does not pay

even an occasional visit to His people. The heavens have received Him till the times of the restitution of all things. He has not grown sick of the world and deserted it. His absence is no sign of altered affection. His heart is as full of love as when He left the bosom of the Father, and hung in agony on the cross. It was needful for us that He should go away, that the economy of grace might be conducted to a triumphant close, and the subjects of His spiritual kingdom be disciplined and trained for a higher sphere of life.

The departure of Christ was necessary to teach His people to walk by faith, and not by sight. Had Jesus continued in person on earth, He could have been visible only to a few; and thousands scattered over the face of the globe would seldom or never have been favoured with His presence. And had He dwelt more permanently with a portion of His friends, the exercise of faith would have been checked by the sight of His face, and the sound of His voice. There would have been little opportunity to put their fidelity to the proof; for they would have felt that He was always looking at them; and there would have been less scope for love than for fear. Seeing the Taskmaster's eye ever upon them, they would have known Him too much after the flesh. But by going away, it was seen who would be faithful, and who would not, during His absence. Scope

was given to the loyalty of their hearts, when they were taught to believe in and love Him, though they had never seen Him; and to obey Him, though they never heard His voice. He sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, that all His people might enjoy the presence and aid of a Teacher suited to their wants; that, guided by His invisible hand, and strengthened by His grace, they might feel the powers of the world to come; and cultivate that spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace. By Him we are taught to believe what no mortal eye can see; and to seize and hold fast what no mortal hand can handle. We learn to cherish a sense of responsibility to an invisible and absent Lord; and to stand true to Him amid all the shifting scenes and flitting shadows of this world. We contemplate Him as a living Being, who thinks upon us, and feels for us; and to whom we are bound by the closest ties of love and gratitude. Truth is held as a reality never to be abandoned; which we will let no power tear out of our hearts. Another world is viewed as not less real, and far more lasting, than the present one; though we behold not its splendours, and hear not its bewitching harmonies. The presence of Christ in heaven directs our thoughts thitherward, and more tenderly endears to us that place as our home. We are thus enabled to live above this vain show; to look higher than all worldly honours and re-

wards; to set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; that where our treasure is, there our hearts may be also. Thus all the influence of this Divine arrangement tends to give spirituality to our desires, and elevation to our thoughts; to wean us from undue attachment to things seen and temporal; that with our hearts free, and our step steady, our course may be ever upward and onward, till we pass the dark frontiers of eternity, be ushered in among the unfading glories of the house of many mansions, and see the King in His beauty, and know even as also we are known.

It is in regard, therefore, to His Divine and spiritual presence, that Christ says, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Yet is it a real and active presence, pregnant with life and blessing. He does not mean that His heart is with His people, as our hearts may be with those whom we love in a distant land, but whom we cannot help, though we wish them well; for He conveys to them many a substantial token of His affection. He is with them in all the affluent energy of His Divine nature; following them in all the ups and downs of life, warding off dangers, and conveying succour; reviving their drooping spirits; comforting their sad hearts; bending over them in their trials, and binding up their wounds; caring for the sheep and the lambs of the flock.

The far country is not too far for Him to reach them. He has ways of sending down gifts to enrich His people. He nourishes the seeds of goodness in their hearts. He draws them by the cords of love. He walks among the golden candlesticks, to replenish the dim lamps with the oil of His grace; to trim them and make them burn with a brighter flame. He sits as a refiner of silver, to purify God's sons and daughters, till He sees His own face reflected in their hearts. He is present wherever two or three are met together in His name, to bless them. He is at the bed-side of every dying saint; to soothe him in his last hours, and show to the eye of faith the heavens opened, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive in His arms the emancipated spirit. He is present at the grave of every Lazarus; to remind weeping friends of the resurrection and the life, to assuage the bitterness of their grief, when the cold earth covers the remains of those beloved ones whose very dust is dear to them. He is in every desolate house, where His bereaved people mourn the loss of the Christian member, whose wonted seat is empty, and whose kind voice they shall hear no more; His eye is upon the silent group; He sees the trickling tear, and hears the smothered sigh, and He points to the happy land where the absent one now dwells, far from all the sins and sorrows of this checquered

life,—a saint in light among the seraphs of heaven; not a stranger, though a new comer in his Father's house; safe after his last battle; at home though all is new around him; happy amid the bliss of redeeming love. Christ is the real Ruler of the world; directing the complex machinery of Providence; and presiding over the holy and benignant operations of grace. He never lets the reins of government out of His own hand; and He curbs the steed in its most unruly movements. He makes the clouds his chariot, and rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm of human events; and can hush the wildest tempest into a calm. The vessel of His government may reel and crack, but He is a Pilot who will steer her safely through all dangers into the port of peace. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." He who died on Calvary has all power given to Him in heaven and on earth. There is no place for blind chance in His dominions. Wisdom and love are on the throne. He has not abandoned the world, but rides forth conquering and to conquer; and will not leave a foot of ground in the hands of the great usurper. He has a hand in all that is done under the sun. Almighty power cannot be vanquished. Divine wisdom cannot be baffled. Divine love must triumph. Error and misrule must fall, and be swept away; still the God-man is among us, to build up the old wastes,

and make all things new. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

III. Christ's Coronation.

He has gone into a far country, to receive for Himself a kingdom. The earth was too mean a place to form the scene of His enthronement; and it did not furnish spectators of a kind to do honour to His exaltation. The choicest spot of the universe was selected for celebrating the great event. In the presence of the Father it was done; and angels and archangels were witnesses of His glory on the august occasion. He came to His own on earth, but they received Him not; the hosannas that rent the air when He rode in triumph into Jerusalem soon died away; and some of the very persons, who carpeted the road with their garments, that He might ride over them, were not slow to join in the malignant cry, "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him!" But a different reception awaited Him in heaven. A bright retinue of angels escorted Him from Bethany to glory. Every heart in heaven glowed with love; and every eye gleamed with delight, as He approached the gates of the celestial city. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty,

the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." Ps. xxiv. 7—10. Forthwith the sparkling gates flew open, and the King of glory and His angelic train entered. All vied with each other to welcome the Divine Conqueror, returning in triumph from His hard-fought battles for the redemption of the world; and bearing in His body the scars of the honourable wounds received on our behalf. All heaven rung with His praises. He was installed in His kingdom with every mark of honour. His enemies cruelly put a crown of thorns upon His innocent head; but the Father with His own hand crowned Him with a crown of glory. Hard-hearted scoffers put in mockery a reed into His hand; but God committed to Him the sceptre of the universe. The soldiers arrayed Him in a purple robe, and in ridicule bowed the knee to Him; but God invested Him with the immortal garments of royal splendour; and all the hosts of heaven bowed the knee in heart-felt reverence, and hailed Him as their King. His enemies nailed Him to the cross, and tormented Him with scoffs and cruelty in His dying hour; but God seated Him beside Himself on His throne, where He reigns in supreme glory and power. Because He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name. He has not only

the title, but the power of a King. He is the light of heaven, and the hope of the world.

Though Christ was a King on earth, as He acknowledged to Pilate, and entered upon all His offices from the first, yet did the great honours of His kingly authority flow out of His priestly sacrifice of Himself. He was crowned with glory, because He died from love. And the Holy Spirit was not given in mighty power, as in the day of Pentecost, till Jesus was glorified. The descent of the Comforter was a proof of the honour and power bestowed upon Him above. "If I go away, I will send Him unto you." How great are His exaltation and authority, since He sent the Divine Comforter to bless His people, and enrich them with heavenly gifts! No mere creature could do this. It was a lovely act, and a truly royal gift; not a dead thing, but a living and loving Friend he sent. He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. His honours are not selfish honours. His treasures are not stored up for Himself. The rebellious owe much to Him, though they thank Him for nothing. All the mercies they enjoy flow from His hand. But for Him the stream of blessings would cease; the clock of the world would go backward; the staff of bread would be broken; the earth would be as iron, and the heavens as brass. There would be

no hope for our race, were He to abandon it. All our efforts to rise would be no better than the desperate struggles of a drowning man. All true knowledge would be extinguished; and all goodness would languish and die. Our knell would ring through the world; and we should lie down in a hopeless grave, unrelieved by one ray of a blessed immortality. He is the Head of the new creation, and the great Renovator of society. His love is ever dropping down fatness upon our path. His kingly office is no sinecure; He is ever working, ever giving, ever ruling in a spirit of wisdom and grace. There is nothing good done under the sun, which is not His work; for it is He who touches the springs of the gracious heart, and bestows the open hand. From His royal seat He beholds us; and daily sends down fresh tokens of His remembrance. Let us give up all our dreams of putting the world right by human wisdom and power. The remedy must come from above; it cannot come from below. The exile cannot restore himself. The orphan cannot make a father or find a home. The dead cannot give themselves life. Speculation is not salvation. Fine theories and glittering fancies cannot form a ladder, by which to ascend to heaven. The deep cries, The remedy is not in me. But Christ says, It is in me. I have received a kingdom which

cannot be moved; will you share it? The door is open for you. I lay its treasures at your feet. Come, and live, and reign with me. You have nothing to pay; for I have paid for all in my own blood. Open your heart wide, and I will fill it. Take hold of my hand by faith, and I will draw you up, and lead you in. Kneel before me in penitence, and though you fall down a beggar, you shall rise a king. "Because I live, you shall live also." My coronation is the pledge and earnest of your own. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Thus are we taught to think of our ascended and glorified Lord, and to have dealings with Himself, as our life and peace. It is a Person, and not a thing, that will fill the aching void of our hearts; preserve us from desponding weakness; and animate us with courage. We need a King to rule and defend us; that, by inspiring us with loyalty to Himself, He may raise us above all effeminate softness and grovelling desires. We need a Divine Friend in heaven, an Advocate with the Father, to draw up our affections, and set them on things above. In Christ God stoops down in love, and mercy, to man; and is both a righteous Governor and a compassionate Saviour; and no

system of doctrine, however correct, can transform and revive us, if it stand between our souls and our once crucified, but now crowned, Redeemer. We may be strangled by orthodoxy. By making it our idol, though good in itself, it becomes a snare; because we dote upon it, and worship the mirror in which His image is seen, while withholding our hearts from the Lord Himself. A sound creed is but the grave of the soul, if He is not its life and centre. Though the meshes of the net that entangles us, be made of beautiful and strong threads of truth, it is still a snare in the hand of the fowler. We pierce our Redeemer with His own doctrines, if we put them in His place. They are but dry bones, if He does not breathe upon them by His Spirit. It has been said, "Great is truth, and it shall prevail;" but let us rather say, Great is Christ, who is the truth, and He shall prevail. We must find Him in the truth, ere it can bring life to us. It is but His seamless garment, for which the soldiers may cast lots, and yet want Himself. We may crucify Him, though we possess His garment. It is in Him we live; and by Him we conquer. It is by union with Him that we are drawn up, and rise above ourselves. We must clasp the hand of the God-man, if we would be partakers of the Divine nature; fulfil the end for which we were made;

and walk the earth as heirs of heaven. It is thus that we shall receive the crown; and sit down with Him upon His throne; and be brought by Him to the banqueting-house, where His banner over us is love.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASTER'S GOODS.

MATT. XXV. 14.

"And delivered unto them his goods."

Our gifts and graces are Christ's goods. They are His property, and never become absolutely our own; they are a trust in our hands, to which He never surrenders His title, or abandons His claims. We may put a new label upon them, and call them by our own names; but we cannot destroy the Divine Maker's mark, nor make them cease to be His. We may dye them with earthly colours, and alter their original form; but He can trace them in all their changes, and put His finger upon what is His own. Stolen goods, and spoiled goods, are still His goods. We may rob the owner, and damage the article; but our guilt cannot efface His goodness, nor make Him cease to be the Proprietor of what came from His hand. "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from the Father of lights;" the marring of the gift is the fault of the creature, but to the Creator it still belongs.

Look at the gifts of nature, and see how entirely they are to be ascribed to the Lord. One child is blessed with a robust and healthy body; another is possessed of a quick, vigorous, and fertile mind; another is favoured with warm affections, and a mild and amiable disposition; and another is surrounded from infancy by the happiest domestic influences, all conspiring to cast the character into the finest mould; and enjoying the advantages of a good education, that act on the heart like the genial breath of spring, drawing forth the buds of opening thought, and the blossoms of radiant hopes and affections. They were not consulted about what they should possess, or the circumstances in which they should be born and reared. Their advantages are not the reward of meritorious conduct in a prior state of existence. This is the first of them. Here they began to be. And God, who ushered them into this world, decked them in all the beauty with which they are adorned; and crowned them with all the gifts that distinguish them from others. They have no reason to be proud of one thing they have, but rather to be ashamed if they do not use their privileges well. All boasting is excluded; for they have no more reason to take credit to themselves, than the blushing rose has for not being a thorn, or the musical lark or nightingale for not being a chirping sparrow. All the glory is due to the Lord. "For who maketh thee to differ

from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

The hand of the Lord is equally manifest in the gifts of grace. Both in the sphere of nature, and of grace, it is the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes. Bodily gifts, mental gifts, and spiritual gifts, are alike God's property. There is nothing good in a man, in regard to which the Lord may not say, "That is mine; I put it there, and it still belongs to me." In each case He is the Giver, and remains the Owner. The gifts of nature, however, do not grow, either by a spontaneous or artificial development, into the graces of the Spirit. The best cultivation will not produce this result. As the theory of development is false, which teaches that, in process of time, one species of animals may pass into a higher in the scale of being; God having fixed bounds which none can pass over, saying to each, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" so that doctrine is false, which teaches that the seeds of all goodness lie slumbering in the soil of the human heart, and only require culture to draw them forth, and make them flourish and bear fruit. The seed is not there, and needs to be cast into the furrows by the hand of the Divine Sower. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" no more can you pluck the fruits of the Spirit from the corrupt

stock of nature. Natural gifts, when sanctified, become spiritual gifts; but a new creation is required to produce the change; and the Author of the first creation is the Author of the second. Saul the persecutor did not convert himself into Paul the saint. Nor did any influence emanate from his companions to originate and complete the marvellous change. The atmosphere in which he moved breathed slaughter. The letters he bore from the high priests goaded him to violence. Promises of promotion and honour flattered his pride, and fanned the flames of ambition. And yet the change came, like life from the dead. The courser was arrested at his highest speed. The lion became a lamb in the very act of springing upon his victim. Hatred was melted into love. A burning thirst for blood was turned into thirst for mercy. The emissary of Satan was transformed into a meek and docile child of God. Christ apprehended him; struck off his old fetters; bound him with the cords of love; and led him away without a struggle; to learn as a new man to use his gifts to the glory of God, who made and redeemed him. He was not free-born, but God made him a citizen of the New Jerusalem; endowed him with all his graces; and taught him to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." As he shuddered and rent his garments at the proposal of the priest of Jupiter to offer sacrifice to him as a God at Lystra,

so would he have been horrified at the thought of taking the honour of this spiritual change to himself. He saw Christ's name in all the graces that beautified his soul. They were good things, but they were all the Lord's things. The King's seal was upon all his treasures. The light he walked in came from heaven. He was rich, but rich in grace; full, but filled with the fulness of God; strong, but strong in the Lord. He lived, but he said, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Let us glance at some of the Lord's goods, which, under the name of talents, He bestows upon mankind.

I. Mental Gifts.

Gifts of mind appear in various forms. Some men are distinguished by force of intellect, by clearness and vigour of understanding. They see their way through an intricate subject with astonishing ease. Everything they grasp with the hand of a giant. Their vision is wide in its range, and far-seeing in its calculations. While others are involved in difficulties, and lose themselves, like a child bewildered in a tangled forest, and "find no end, in wandering mazes lost;" with singular dexterity, as if guided by a superior instinct, they thread their way out of the labyrinth into the clearly defined path, where the sun sweetly shines. There is a quiet energy in their move-

ments. In grappling with difficulties, their stroke is powerful, and their aim sure. Truth, in their hands, is a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. In the pursuit of knowledge, or in matters of business, where many are impeded in their course by difficulties, like Samson with the gates of Gaza on his shoulders they go on their way rejoicing, and ascend with ease to the top of the hill of excellence.

Another class of minds are endowed with a rich imagination and a brilliant fancy. They live in no tame, prosaic world. They have an eye for the poetical side of things. They adorn whatever they touch; and weave garlands around the brow even of every-day life. The whole world is laid under contribution, to decorate the theme that interests them. Like the ancient prophets, their thoughts flow out in a rich stream of poetry and eloquence. Noble images come tripping at their bidding. Mines of mental wealth seem to open under their feet. They "call spirits from the vasty deep," and they come at their call, radiant and lovely. They present truth to the mind in delightful pictures, and hang them up on the walls of memory, that they may never be forgotten. They teach us better by similitudes than others do by arguments; and give everything a life-like air and look. The heart glows at their descriptions; and their vivid colouring imparts a

rosy tint to the dull grey of things; and imprints them more deeply on the mind. They show us the affluence of God in His works and ways; and unveil the nobleness of what looks mean in the eyes of many dim-sighted mortals. Walking with them, springs appear in the desert where all seems dry and barren. They speak and write as if they had spent their childhood in Eden; and their minds were still laden with the treasures they had gathered there; and memory still lingered among the fragrant delights they enjoyed in that Paradise-home. They present us with apples of gold in net-work of silver; and exhibit truth in its holiday dress;—not as a dry abstraction; but with love in its heart; a smile on its face; beauty in its form; and a gift in its hand:

> "Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns."

The chords of another order of minds are attuned to music. Sounds of sweet melody make their hearts thrill with delight. Their thoughts and words shape themselves into harmony. Their life is set to music. The slightest touch makes every string in them vibrate. The passing breeze salutes them in its course, and awakes their slumbering melody, like the wind sweeping over the strings of the Æolian harp.

> "As they sing, they take the prison'd soul,
> And lap it in Elysium."

Charmed by the magic of the sound, their enchanted hearers say,

> "But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
> Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
> I never heard till now."

Like David with his harp, soothing the melancholy spirit of Saul, they drive away for a time the cloud of despondency from the brow, and sorrow from the heart. The heart of childhood exults at the sound; and breathless listeners, eagerly drinking in the stream of floating joy, show with what a mighty spell the genius of Music can bind the human soul.

Such are a few of the mental gifts with which God endows His rational creatures. Let no one despise any of them; for whosoever despiseth the gift, despiseth God, the wise and gracious Giver thereof. Every such faculty has a Divine aspect, as well as a human. It is a reflection of what is in God Himself; and is implanted in the soul for great and good ends. The abuse is man's work, but the gift is God's; and it is capable of a high and holy application. No doubt, mere intellectual endowments and culture present but a cold, phosphoric light, without grace. We have a sad illustration of this in the history of the descendants of Cain. They were a highly gifted race. Lamech

was the Poet of the family; but he prostituted his gift by sitting in the seat of the scorner. Jubal was the Musician of the family; and was the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ. Tubal Cain was a man of mechanical genius, — an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. Their gifts were severed from holy affections, withheld from the service of God; but this was not the fault of the gifts, but of the men. We find every variety of talent in the Bible devoted to the cause of God. And what *has* been, *may* be again. Christianity proscribes none of God's gifts. It provides a field for the exercise of them all; for it is designed to perfect man, and not to mutilate him. It is a kind mother to nurse and train him; and not a tyrant to crush his soul, and mangle his powers. Whatever comes from God may be used for God. No faculty is to be imprisoned, and silenced, or disbanded as an unholy thing. Satan will employ it, if we do not. Christ has made room for it; let it be drawn out, enlisted under His banner, and taught to perform its functions. It may be baptized unto Christ, and made sacred. Let it be entwined around the Divine, and it will shoot up heavenward. Let it breathe the air of the temple, and it will grow up, like little Samuel, in the service of God.

II. Warm and gentle Affections.

Some wear their ornaments in the heart. They are decked in the beauties of an amiable disposition. Sweet affections blossom upon them like fragrant shrubs; and shed a delightful perfume. They have a winning influence, which steals insensibly over the soul, and leads us captive. They live in an atmosphere of tenderness; and there is a charm in all they say and do. Their presence calms and soothes ruffled spirits, pouring oil upon the troubled waters, and allaying the turbulence of excited passion. They are received everywhere with a cordial welcome; and their departure occasions universal regret. A quiet joy springs up at the sound of their voice, and at the mantling of their gentle smile. Faces brighten when they come; and many tongues praise and bless them when they go away. All they say is kindly said; and all they do is kindly done. They subdue by gentleness. They stoop to conquer. Their victories are gained by love. Their sympathies are warm: "they rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." They are slow to offend, and ready to oblige. They are happy in making happy. And when these gracious affections flow out of a renewed heart, when such an attractive temperament is pervaded and regulated by Divine grace, the Christian character is arrayed in singular loveliness. Truth and mercy meet together, and faithfulness is tempered with love.

Christianity, which is a sweet-smelling savour to God, commends itself to the heart and conscience of man. Holiness is blended with an angelic sweetness; and the heart melts and drops a tear, when the tongue reproves.

This is a gift of great value and excellence; and may be made an instrument of great usefulness. Some can accomplish by the warm and gentle kindness of their hearts, what others fail to attain by the clearness of their heads and the force of their intellects. The oil of mild affection can insinuate itself into crevices, and work its way through rocky obstacles, where mental strength can make no impression. This pleasing spirit is not a flower which the hand of God has planted to "waste its sweetness on the desert air;" but to regale the hearts of men, and shed its odours in the house of God. Such an attractive and moulding influence in the heart of a family, and in the private walks of life, is of inestimable value. It acts as a purifying leaven in society. It makes godliness look graceful; and renders obedience an ornament and delight. Good counsel is more readily received, when love smooths the way for its entrance. Hearts fly open at the approach of kindness, that are locked and bolted against a stern visitor. Affection softens the soil, and prepares it for the good seed. Gratitude makes the words of wisdom welcome; and opens the ear to

truth. Many who sit still at the summons of authority will run at the call of love. Love apprehends and leads captive those whom no other power can bind. It draws with its silken cords hearts that force cannot move with its cart-rope. Its gracious office is,

> "By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
> And make persuasion do the work of fear."

Of this we have a beautiful example in a tradition of the apostle John. When engaged in visiting the churches of Asia Minor, observing at one place a young man of a singularly interesting countenance, he was prepossessed in his favour; and warmly recommended him to the good offices of the pastor. The youth was baptized, and for a time held out the promise of superior Christian excellence and usefulness. But at length, beginning to toy with temptation, the influence of evil companions prevailed over the better feelings awakened by Christian instruction; and plunging into one excess after another, he became at last the captain of a band of robbers. This sad issue wrung John's heart with the keenest anguish. He learned the haunt of the robbers; and, moved by the ardour of his love, he went to the place; and when seized by them, he said, "Bring me to your captain." The young captain of the gang saw him coming; but as soon as he recognised the face of the aged and venerable apostle, he was filled

with shame: he had not courage to meet the eye of the grey-headed saint who had been so kind to him; and he turned and fled, as if pursued by an armed host. But the old man was not to be baffled. Weak and infirm though he was, he followed him. With his white hair streaming over his shoulders, he cried as he ran, "My son, my son, why fliest thou from thy father, unarmed, and old? Fear not; still there is hope. Believe me, Christ hath sent me. Return, my son, my son." At these words the young man stood still; trembled; and wept like a child. John clasped him in his arms; prayed over him; exhorted him to repent; spoke kindly to him; brought him back a willing captive; and restored him to the church. Thus did feebleness conquer strength by the spiritual weapon of love. The old man took the prodigal by the hand, and led him as a penitent to his Father's house. Like the dying thief on the cross, a mysterious power smote his heart. He was remembered and blest. It was self-sacrificing kindness that rushed after him into the fire, and plucked him as a brand from the burning.

III. Rank and Power.

These advantages are not conferred to pamper pride and vanity. Those who make an elevated position in society an instrument for show and glitter, who take their places on the platform only

to be seen and admired, have yet to learn the end for which the Providence of God put them there. Power over others has been put into their hands, and the exercise of that power should be made beneficial to their fellow-men. A higher station has been assigned them in the scale of society than to many around them in the world; and as from the sides of mountains streams flow down to water the plains, so should a fertilizing influence descend from them to the lower strata of society. They have much in their power, for those under them are prone to be their imitators, and it behoves them to take care that they shall have good and not evil to copy in their patterns. They can do more good with less effort than other people. Persons in a lower station are taken with their condescension. A word of encouragement and comfort from their lips goes a great way, and is deeply felt and long remembered. This is a power too little understood and exercised. Oh! that it were more known. It would tend to bind man to man, and make them feel as brothers. It would allay burning jealousies and kindling animosities; and open to generous feelings hearts that are soured with envy and hatred. It would throw a bridge over the chasm that is widening between the extremes of society, and restore confidence and love. Power exercised in a Christian spirit, and combined with personal piety, is a grand con-

ductor for benefiting all to whom its exercise extends. Like the fragrant oil poured on the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garments, this gracious influence would descend with a healing and sweet efficacy, carrying truth and joy into many homes. The trees yielding precious gums have their bark punctured that the liquid treasure may flow out; and those who grow like trees among the shrubs of society, should exude a sweet influence for the nourishment of others; and, pierced with the knife of trouble, and taught the value of sympathy, the refreshing stream should never cease to run.

We cannot be too careful about the kind of influence we exercise over those who are placed under us. Though not occupying an elevated position, we may be so related to a portion of our fellow-men as to possess no small power in forming their character and contributing to their happiness. If our example be such as to prove a snare to them; if we allure them into temptation, and check the growth of Christian principles and affections in their hearts, and discourage them in the pursuit of religious knowledge and in the practice of sacred duties; if they learn little from us but what tends to keep God out of their thoughts; if in our arrangements we never study their improvement, but throw unnecessary barriers in the way of their spiritual good, and lay on them

heavy burdens when they should be in the house of God; if our exercise of power is harsh and stern, and not softened by kindness; if we treat them rather as machines than as beings endowed with the feelings of humanity, and susceptible of its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears; all the injury done to them God will require at our hands. It will not do for us to say that we have nothing to do with their Christian improvement and happiness; we have to do with them by the very relation in which they stand to us. The ties that bind them to us should be so tempered and exercised as to draw them in kindness to ourselves, and in love and obedience to God. All power is a sacred trust, and its abuse cannot go unpunished. It should be the channel of goodness. Be it great or small, it is not to be trifled with, and may be made an instrument of great usefulness. It is a gift of God, and should be used in accordance with His will, and for the benefit of His creatures. If rulers of kingdoms are bound to rule well, so are masters and heads of families; that their little kingdom may be a miniature picture of the kingdom of Christ,—the grand model of all government.

IV. Worldly Substance.

Earthly goods are variously distributed. Some have more than they know well what to do with;

and there are others, whose means are so small, that they have a daily struggle to live. But whatever be the portion of worldly substance possessed by individuals, the use made of it, and the purposes to which it is applied, involve a grave responsibility. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." Haggai ii. 8. "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Psalm l. 10. No man can with propriety say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" God is entitled to say this; for all things are absolutely His; and His will is ever wise, and just, and good. But it is the height of presumption in man to use such language. He has a legal right, but not a moral and religious one. What he calls his own is not really his own; for it belongs to God. The Creator never surrenders His right to what He gives, either as to His power to withdraw it at His pleasure, or to prescribe the end for which it is to be employed. We are His stewards, and not our own masters; leaseholders, and not proprietors. Whether a possession comes by inheritance or is acquired by skill and industry, the same rule holds good. In each case God says, You received this in my good Providence; it is a loan from my hand; use it for me. In regard to it, my will and not yours must be done. You are not to waste it on your lusts, or to spend it as you please; but my name must be

honoured in the use to which it is put. The world in which you dwell is mine; and you should live in it for me; if you do not, it will be the worse for you when you leave it. Call not the things of this life *goods*, if I am excluded from them; for there is nothing *good* in which I have not my place.

Some use their money as if God had nothing to do with it. They make a god of this world. Mammon is their idol. They hoard, and hold with a miser's feelings. To part with anything for Christ is like taking their heart's blood, and tearing their flesh from their bones. They are slaves to the things that perish; and what they have is a burden that weighs them down with corroding cares, and pierces them through with many sorrows. "Woe to them that load themselves with thick clay!" Though receiving all from God, they give Him nothing in return, or next to nothing, and that with a grudge. Sometimes they cloak their parsimony by professing to refuse on the ground of principle. In other cases, it is to be done by Will after they are dead; as if God could be honoured by their giving up what they can no longer keep, when the rude hand of death has stripped them bare. Surely it were better to be benefactors while they live, to stimulate and encourage their fellow-men by their example; and enjoy the satisfaction of doing good in their day and generation.

There are others who profess to have nothing to spare for any Christian object, and yet are wasteful and extravagant in their habits. The height of their ambition is to live in an expensive style; to wear more costly garments, and give more splendid feasts, than others. Material show is the alpha and omega of their vulgar tastes. They have neither heart nor eye for true greatness, for nobility of soul, and divinity of character. They are selfish in their waste, for they will spare nothing from their personal gratification for holier objects. They cannot afford to give. It takes all they have to keep them. Their income hardly meets their expenditure. No wonder! It would be the same if they had double. They turn luxuries into necessaries by their habits. "Their appetite grows by what it feeds on." Their pampered desires ever cry for more. Their foolish ambition must go farther up the ladder of pride with every fresh accession to their means. The Holy Spirit says, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the *first-fruits* of all thine *increase;*" but instead of devising more liberal things for God with each addition, they begin to think what new career of vanity they shall launch out into; what other exhibition they shall make of vain-glory, that shall dazzle the eyes of the world, and draw popular admiration. Such a spirit swallows up everything; and leaves not even a few fragments for God. It

is a net that encloses great and small in its capacious bosom, and draws up all on the shore of self-love. It is a sea with a lower and lower deep; where thousands upon thousands sink and disappear.

How much more dignified and godlike the spirit of those who feel their responsibility to God; who seek to serve Him with His own; and esteem it an honour to be fellow-workers with Him in doing good! With David they say, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." 1 Chron. xxix. 11—14. All things are of God, and all things should be used for Him. Such persons seek to enjoy His temporal mercies by enjoying Him in them. They find a blessing in what is left, by remembering Him in what they give. Instead of spending all upon themselves, they deny themselves for His sake; they resolve to do without indulgences which others will

not want, that they may have wherewith to help to advance Christ's cause in the world. The Lord hath need of it; and they will not let Him want, what, with willing hearts and good management, they can spare; trusting to Him to provide for them in the future, as He has done in the past. They offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Their whole life is a song of praise to Him for His goodness. They may have little to give, but acting in a spirit of self-sacrifice, and reckoning themselves "holy unto the Lord," dedicated and set apart to Him; the believing, willing, loving, and grateful heart, that beats in their breasts, mightily enhances the value of their offerings. The widow's mite, who gave all that she had, sounds through the world above the fame of the rich and noble, who gave out of their abundance; and she, who poured the precious spikenard on Christ's head, has a memory as fragrant as the sweet ointment that flowed from her alabaster vial; and wheresoever the gospel is preached, her praises are extolled for having done what she could.

Some dispensers of charity think that they fulfil their trust, if a certain portion of their goods passes out of their hands. They are not at pains to bestow their gifts wisely, and well. It is easy for affluent persons, with benevolent feelings, to give what they can easily spare, and never feel the want of; but this does not fulfil their functions,

nor exhaust their obligations. They are bound to discriminate; and take the trouble of encouraging and aiding the most deserving objects. Individuals of warm and tender feelings, who cannot resist an appeal to their compassion, are open to all sorts of imposture; and they bestow upon the profligate, what would supply the wants and cheer the hearts of the destitute and well-behaved. By their ill-advised liberality, the abandoned are supplied with the means of sinful indulgence; and the young are trained to habits of idleness and dishonesty. Professional beggars are thus encouraged to infest our streets, who grow into criminals, and help to fill our jails. Such misdirected charity is a curse to the land; and serves to counteract the wise and energetic efforts of social reform. These weak, but well-meaning donors of charity, are manufacturers of criminals; and offer a daily bounty to deceit and wickedness. While wise heads and warm hearts are drawing up the degraded masses of society, who are fermenting at its base; they are fostering the very passions and habits that debase them, and drag them down to the whirlpool of pollution. Their benevolence leads to rags, and drunkenness, and crime. Those who have means, are bound to inquire into the habits and condition of the recipients of their gifts, that they may throw their weight into the scale of godliness, and foster good principles and conduct;

and make their generosity conducive to the encouragement of industry and a Christian life. If no care is taken, they are acting as the patrons of evil-doers; they are multiplying the pests of society; and their money would be better thrown into the sea. Jesus did not work miracles of healing without cherishing a right spirit in the recipients of His mercy. The temporal should be the handmaid of the moral and spiritual.

There are individuals, again, who will contribute to the support of temporal objects, but who will not give a farthing to the aid of religious ones; or their contributions are so small as to be an absolute mockery, considering the goodness and the grandeur of the cause to be promoted. Their sympathies are enlisted on the side of bodily suffering and want; their compassion is kindled by touching scenes, and harrowing tales, of temporal distress; but they have neither ear, nor eye, nor heart, for the misery of perishing souls. They scout all schemes for the Christian instruction and conversion of sinners as visionary; and consider the money devoted to them as no better than thrown away. And yet not a few of this class of individuals profess to be Christians, and acknowledge Christ to be both their Lord and example. Marvellous inconsistency! These professing disciples proclaim by their conduct that they condemn His mission, and that it was a foolish and

Utopian errand on which He left heaven for earth, to die for the salvation of man. If they are right, He was wrong. If it is wise in them to be blind to the greatness of spiritual interests, and to refuse to do anything to further the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of the world; it could not be wise in Him to give Himself to this sublime work of mercy, and to suffer and do so much to conduct it to a successful issue. His kingdom is not of this world; and while effecting more for the welfare of man's bodily and temporal interests, than any religion ever promulgated, it assigns the pre-eminence to what is spiritual and eternal; and puts it in the foreground as presenting the grand aim of His mission. Though spiritual things lay the best and most secure foundation on which to erect temporal prosperity, and social and individual happiness; it is not for the sake of the lower in the scale of excellence that the higher and nobler are introduced. Faith, and truth, and holiness, are not the framework of a scaffolding constructed for rearing bodily and earthly benefits, and to be valued only as subservient to this end; but they form a possession unspeakably superior to all that pertains to this fleeting world; and are in themselves the imperishable wealth of the immortal soul; bulwarks of defence; sources of pure and elevating delight; and the most effectual promoters of progress and peace. Jesus wept

over perishing souls, over whom a thunder-cloud of portentous and appalling calamities was about to burst, for their rejection of a free salvation. For the redemption of sinners, He poured out His blood upon the bitter cross; for the successful carrying out of the work of mercy, He still pleads at His Father's right hand; and sends down the Holy Spirit to guide the steps and bless the labours of those, who go forth at His call to publish the glad tidings of mercy to the ends of the earth. Is it beneath them to cultivate a field of labour, which is ever near His heart; and which He is commanding men to enter every day, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature?" What sort of disciples and Christians are those, who will not give their money to an object, for which their Master gave His blood?

V. Time.

In this busy and elbowing age, where earnest competition taxes both mind and body, allowing but a short and hurried breathing-time during intervals of leisure, many may look with despair on the prospect of snatching a few hours for higher purposes than those of secular business. But it is a solemn thing to live; and time is too precious to be all engulfed; and its very fragments should be gathered up, that nothing may be lost. Like the

Sibylline books, which rose in value as one and another was burned, the remnants of time should be more highly esteemed the more rare they are. This is our seed-time, and as we sow here we shall reap hereafter. We shall have it but once, and if the harvest prove bad, we shall never have a better. We live here but once; and if we live ill, we shall not have an opportunity to make another trial, that we may live better. We have but one race to run, and great should be our care not to miss the prize. Time is the bud in which eternity is wrapped up to each of us; and it is a matter of life and death, whether it expand into glory and immortality, or into the bitterness of dust and ashes. We may store it with blessings or curses. Every day we are putting good or evil into it. Every hour is charged with a message of weal or woe. As it is spent, it flies before us, swifter than the speed of lightning, to tell a tale of life or death. It is faithful to its trust, and will lose nothing that is committed to it, but will lodge everything in the hands of eternity. Time is God's gift; let it be consecrated to Him; and the more we give it to Him, the more will it give to us. Let us not make it a grave to bury the soul in; but a cradle to rear it for heaven, a field to train it for the inheritance of the saints in light. If we fill it with Christ, it will leave a rich legacy for us, to be enjoyed beyond the grave. Freighted with

the treasures of grace, it will sail away laden with goodly pearls; and when we quit the body, we shall not find the noble vessel wrecked on the shore of the eternal world, with all the valuable cargo sunk beneath the waves, or scattered among the rocks, but we shall behold all safe in the harbour when we arrive, every blessing awaiting us in Immanuel's land.

What a treasure, then, is in the hands of those, who have no regular employment to occupy them; who are placed by their temporal condition above want, and all anxiety about the means of support; and have not to toil for their bread with the labour of their hands or the sweat of their brow! To what valuable account might they turn this precious gift of time, by being imitators of Him, who went about doing good; delighting to relieve the burdens of the oppressed and the miserable; to carry light into benighted families, and joy into sad and bereaved hearts! To devote a portion of their time to this sacred object, would help to give relief to their own weary minds, and to diffuse a salutary and cheerful influence over their other hours. Habits would be formed, and affections exercised, that would prove a blessing to themselves as well as to their fellow-men, and save them from many a snare and danger. In the improved tone of their minds, in the healthy and benevolent play of their affections, and in the luxury of exerting

themselves in doing good, they would possess a fund of wealth and enjoyment, which they could carry with them without trouble, wherever they go; and for which they would pay neither tax, nor freight, nor toll. The vacuity of their existence would thus be broken up; and corroding ennui, that eats in upon the heart like rust, and burns like fire, would be dispelled; and they would taste a pleasure to which they are strangers —the pleasure of rest after labour, and of wiping away the tears from the eyes of the sorrowful; of sowing the seed of truth in the hearts of the ignorant; and of exercising self-denial for another's good. The memory of such things is sweet; and the end is better than the beginning.

Much precious time is spent in gossiping visits, which are a source both of sin and weariness; for they lead often to uncharitable conversation, and to that trifling frivolity, which enfeebles and dissipates the mind. Nothing is more insnaring than such idle and fitful talk. It insensibly draws the listener into its circling eddies; and tempts to the utterance of some uncharitable opinion, which afterward leads to poignant regret. Then, there are amusements which so lower the religious temperature of the soul, and destroy delight in serious occupation, and indispose the mind to calm and retired thoughtfulness; that all earnestness and energy of purpose melt away, transparency of

spirit is lost, and the heart is covered with the froth and scum of vanity. When time hangs heavy on men's hands, they are beset with peculiar danger; and being ready to fly to anything that holds out the promise of relief, they are at the mercy of any stray temptation that may cross their path. They try to *kill* time, and in one sense they succeed. They destroy it for all the good and great purposes for which it is given. It is murdered; and its mutilated remains, its wasted moments, are scattered along their path at every step; and its innocent blood, like that of saintly Abel, cries to God against the Cain-like hearts and hands by which it has been shed. But, in another sense, time cannot be *killed*. No weapon can slay it, and no grave can hold it. It is immortal, and clings to us with invincible tenacity. If abused, it will run after us like a weeping child, and proclaim our cruelty. The starved, ill-treated offspring, will testify against the unnatural conduct of the parents. It will appear at the bar of God against its crucifiers. They cannot kill time, but time will kill them. It would be better and safer for such to labour long and hard, than be the victims of idleness and the sport of temptation. Rather let them chalk out for themselves some mental work, and explore some province of the wonderful works of God in nature; that they may have something interesting and useful to engage their

thoughts, and fill up a portion of their time, than live as they do. They do not live, they only vegetate; for the life they lead involves none of the elements of a life worthy of rational and moral beings. The very crows lead more worthy lives; for if they eat corn they kill the grub; whereas those idlers are themselves the grubs and moths of society.

Much may be done where there is a willing mind and a resolute spirit. Some never have time for anything good or useful, though they have nothing to do; while others who lead busy and active lives, contrive to secure time both for mental culture and practical benevolence. They seize the golden hours, and fill them as they pass. They let nothing be lost; and advance in the course of improvement and honour, undaunted by difficulties, "scorning delights and living laborious days." Look at Dr. Mason Good, as he wends his way through the crowded streets of London to visit his patients, translating the book of Job as he walks along. He has committed the Hebrew to memory before leaving his house; and he fills up the intervals of his busy hours during the day in mental translation of the sublime poetry of the original. By his devoted perseverance and indefatigable industry, he acquired an amount of Oriental and theological learning, beyond the attainments of many, whose profession led them to the same

studies, and whose whole life was consecrated to them. Time redeemed is time saved; and every hour so spent will meet us like the bee returning to the hive laden with honey.

> "Time destroy'd
> Is suicide, where more than blood is spilt.
> . . . . . A moment we may wish,
> When worlds want wealth to buy."

VI. The kingdom of God within us.

However small may be the gifts and advantages of a man in other respects, he is possessed of one of great price, when he has the one thing needful, the good part that shall not be taken away from him. God has given him a jewel deposited in the casket of his body, and he must not only treasure it up for his own sake, but also use it for the good of others. Whatever be his condition in society, or his position in the church, he has got a good thing from the God of love; and while prizing it highly as making him rich, he is bound in love to get his fellow-men to share it; that they may rejoice together as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. A lamp is not made to be hid under a bushel, or concealed in any other way; but to be hung up, that it may give light to all that are in the house; and every Christian should shine as a light in the world, to adorn the doctrine of the grace of God, and show wandering and

benighted mortals the way to heaven. He may not be a star of the first magnitude, but shine he must, though on a small scale, that others seeing his good works may glorify our Father in heaven.

> " Heaven does with us, as we with torches do;
> Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 't were all alike
> As if we had them not. "

Private Christians have, therefore, a gift to exercise and a work to do, as well as those who have an official standing in the church. They owe their salvation to Christ equally with those who are placed in a more public position; and as they are not their own, but bought with a price, they are bound to glorify Him with their bodies and spirits, their time and means, which are His. There can be no dead members of Christ's body, no drones in His hive; but all must be honey-makers as well as honey-eaters. Never will the church of the living God exert upon the world the leavening and transforming influence which it should exert, and do the good which it should do, till the Andrews and Philips, who have found the Lord, bring the Peters and Nathaniels to Him; and communicate the electric fire of the gospel to the hearts of their fellow-men. Till this is done, the influence of the gospel will be too much a professional thing, and too much of a mere Lord's day

thing, and be kept out of those private and social channels in which it must flow, if it is to find its way into all the ramifications of human life, and diffuse its healing spirit over the whole surface, and touch and regulate the hidden springs, of society. Every believer must be a conductor of its truth, and love to do it justice. It is not put into a few chosen vessels, to be poured out for the benefit of mankind, while kept sealed in others; but all Christians are vessels of honour for the Master's use, and they should communicate of their abundance to empty souls. Every believer possesses the salt of Divine truth and grace, and he should prove the salt of the earth, by coming in contact with those who are still in the corruption of sin, with nothing to preserve them from ruin and decay. Christ is the great Physician, but private Christians are physicians under Him, to aim at the cure of souls in the hospital of the church. It behoves all who are on the rock of salvation to stretch forth a helping hand to those who are struggling and sinking in the gulf of sin, that they may draw them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. Those who are within the kingdom of grace should show their gratitude to God, and their love to man, by taking the blind by the hand, and leading them within the gates.

Such is a sample of the goods, or talents, committed to us. We have all some of them, in one

form or other. But besides, we have each a trust in the keeping of ourselves. We have each an immortal soul in our mortal bodies, and the Lord says, Keep that for me: guard it well; for it is a precious treasure, and is worth more than the whole world. It is lodged in the frail tabernacle as in a cage; teach it to sing my praises; that, when it is set free, it may join those who sing the new song with heart and tongue, in the temple above. Cultivate the little vineyard of your own heart, and make it a model for others to imitate. You have not to go far to reach it. It is at the door; and you are put into it to dress it and to keep it. Do not hide yourselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of that garden; but welcome His approach, that He may be a wall of fire around you, and the glory in the midst of you. All the powers of the mind, and affections of the heart, should be under the dominion of the Lord. They are to be cultivated to the honour of His name. But never forget that you need His help to do it successfully. You take your time-piece to the watchmaker, to clean and regulate it; and you should take your soul to the Lord, the Heart-maker, that he may put in order His own workmanship, which has been disordered by sin. The wheels need to be oiled; and there is only one kind of oil that will do,—the oil of grace. The soul, like the body, is mysteriously strung, and it

requires the Divine hand of the Maker to put the strings right, and keep them right.

" Man is a harp whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, disposed aright :
The screws reversed, (a task which, if he please,
God in a moment executes with ease,)
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use ! "

CHAPTER III.

THE RICHNESS AND VARIETY OF THE MASTER'S GIFTS.

MATT. XXV. 15.

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability."

THE variety, both of natural and spiritual gifts, is strikingly exhibited by our Lord in this part of the parable. Unity, under boundless diversity, is the law of the Divine procedure in creation, and providence, and grace. God does not repeat Himself in the same tame and monotonous round; but at every step in His majestic pathway, and at every touch of His wonderful hand, discloses fresh instances of His inexhaustible resources. The gifts, with which mankind are endowed, differ both in measure and kind. The same faculties do not exist in equal strength in all; and talents, which are bestowed upon some, are wholly wanting in others. There is a variety in the degree, and a variety in the style and order of gifts; some

being comparatively coarse in quality, while others are fine and delicate.

"He gave to every man according to his several ability." This language is borrowed from the relation subsisting between masters and slaves, in ancient times. Many of the slaves were well educated; and were a source of gain to their masters by their professional ability. Some of them were skilful and expert artisans, who engaged to pay a fixed yearly sum, and had the rest of the profits to themselves. Others were intrusted with a sum of money, or a portion of their master's goods, that they might trade with the same, and set apart to him a share of their gains. In this distribution, their respective capacities were considered; and each received according to his estimated ability. In the Parable, this language seems to be applied to the natural ability of men as the groundwork of their spiritual gifts. Grace does not melt down the elements of the individual character, nor destroy what is distinctive and peculiar in a man. The apostles retained their individual peculiarities after conversion, which had distinguished them before their spiritual change. Christ did not make those able who were not originally able; but He sanctified their respective talents, and consecrated them to the holy work of His kingdom. Peter, and John, and James, and Paul, retained their old distinctive lineaments

even in their palmiest states of spiritual life and inspiration; and were never stripped, and reduced to a common standard. Mary and Martha, while both children of God, never lost their native gifts; which rendered the former quiet, gentle, and contemplative; and the latter ardent, managing, and active. Individuals are as vessels, varying in shape and size, which do not hold the same quantity, but which are filled according to their several capacities. The liquid metal runs into moulds of different form and measure, till they are full; shaping itself according to the bends and indentations of the pattern: and so the grace of God, while renewing the soul, adapts itself to the original proportions and peculiarities of its original mould.

There are two opposite mistakes committed in regard to God's gifts to man. The first, is that of those who lay so much stress on mental gifts and acquirements, that, in their eyes, these things are all in all in the Church. Intellect and learning are the gods of their idolatry; and instead of assigning them their proper place, they make them both shell and kernel. They forget that such gifts may coexist in the Church with spiritual death. Great abilities and learning are noble possessions when sanctified; but when divorced from the grace of God, they are but splendid vestments for wrapping a dead Church in. Truth then exists

in books, but does not live in the heart. There is science, but no religion; argument, but no faith. The gospel is minutely dissected and analyzed; but its Divine power is unfelt. The temple is measured, and an elaborate plan of it given; but the holy of holies is never entered, and the heart is a stranger to the reverence it inspires. You have a sketch of the altar, but no holy fire burns upon it. The lamps are there with all their external ornaments, but they give no light. Woe to a Church that mere talents rule! You may write on her walls, Ichabod, Ichabod, The glory is departed. She puts man in the place of Christ. She bows to her own shadow, and admires her own image. "She sacrifices unto her net, and burns incense unto her drag." She worships herself, and not her God. She is dead, and needs to be buried out of sight. She lies in state like a dead queen, amid empty magnificence; and her acquirements are but the fine linen of Egypt, to adorn a mummy and dress it for the tomb. The sounds heard are the melancholy chant of a funeral dirge, which seems to say to us, Let us go hence, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The other extreme, is that of depreciating ability and learning, in order to exalt piety. Many well-meaning, but weak persons, look with jealousy and scorn on everything vigorous and intellectual in the field of Christianity. Sickly and

sentimental in their tastes, they have no sympathy with any thing which is not simply devotional; and condemn whatever is without the stamp and colour of their peculiar school. Had their ideas been embodied in the Bible, it would not have been the Book that it is; and were it subjected to their test and crucible, it would be divested of many of its distinguishing features, and shorn of some of its highest honours. No doubt, great gifts and learning may be no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; they may dig too deep or soar too high to be followed by ordinary minds; and their mode of thinking may be so subtle and refined, and their language so obscure, that they might as well speak and write in an unknown tongue. But this is not an invariable accompaniment or a true mark of gifted and well-furnished minds. They are often characterized by the simplicity of childhood, and the clearness of noon-day. They may be as humble and devout as those, who have not a tithe of their capacity or knowledge. And though God employs men of inferior powers to do good in private and limited circles, who, by faith, and love, and prayer, leaven the souls of their fellows; yet does He raise up instruments of another weight and calibre, to meet emergencies in the evolutions of history; to lead the forlorn-hope in storming the strongholds of error and sin; and make large and lasting conquests in the do-

minions of the prince of darkness; and when the enemy is coming in like a flood, to stand in the breach, and lift up a standard against him. Good men, without great gifts, have never made an impression upon their age, or stamped their image upon their nation. Their influence never overleaps the barriers of their narrow sphere. When God has a great work to do, and a deep and wide impression to make, He brings upon the stage a man of commanding mind, as well as of burning piety. After putting him through a course of preparatory discipline, He draws him from obscurity; when, putting the trumpet of truth to his lips, he blows a war-blast so solemn and awakening, that the heart of the nation thrills and leaps at the sound. It is by the union of gifts and graces that the work is done. We gather the spoils won for us by those Christian giants. We reap what they sowed, and live upon their labours. We are wafted by the breeze, and borne along by the wave of throbbing impulse, which they set in motion. No man of common powers could have filled the place, and discharged the functions, of Moses in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderness. It was not a person of the ordinary type of character who could have done the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem; controlling the disorganized people, and reforming their lives; and re-

storing the neglected worship of the God of their fathers. Samuel and David, Elijah and Daniel, John and Paul, and other saintly and illustrious worthies, whose names are enrolled in letters of light in the bright pages of inspiration; and Luther and Knox and Bunyan, whose names are still watchwords in the camp of Israel; who struck a note in the ear of the world not yet forgotten, and did a work in their day, which posterity will not willingly let die; were burning and shining lights, great as well as good. They were torch-bearers, whom God honoured, and who honoured God. Had they forgotten Him, He would have dashed their torches to the ground, and extinguished their light; but "Glory to God," was their cry; and He kept them burning, till at death they were translated to a better region, to shine as the stars for ever and ever. Such men are the levers by which God moves the world. We cannot do without them. Let us thank God for those that have already risen in our dark world; and let us pray to Him to give more. Oh! that we saw a man of ten-talent mark now, to be a pilot in the storm; to arouse the slumbering, and crush the wayward; to stand as a watchman on the walls of Zion, and sound the alarm in the prospect of danger; to marshal the divided and scattered forces of Christianity into one firm and united phalanx against the embattled hosts of error and iniquity; to

sweep away the hollow and trample under-foot the base; to conduct a crusade against all that misleads and enslaves the human soul; to preach the cross and to bear it; to wage war to the death against empty forms and lifeless professions; that our religion may not be felt as a chain and a burden, but our life, liberty, and joy; that our teeth may no longer be set on edge with sour grapes, but that we may feast on the ripe and mellow fruit of God's Spirit; have Christ's company to make our hearts burn within us along the path of life; and be brought to His banqueting-house, where His banner over us is love; that he may be God's instrument for breathing life into the dry bones; that the sleeping may awake, the dead live, and the dumb speak, and with one heart and one mouth may glorify God; that he may show what a man may be, and dare, and do for the Lord who bought him; and may rally around him the disjointed members, that waste their strength from want of a head, and inspire them with his own ardour, by pointing to heaven and leading the way; that by rising above the tame level of every-day aims and attainments, he may stir up a spirit of Christian heroism in the human breast, and ascending higher and higher the ladder stretching between earth and heaven, may draw the Church and the age after him, till the old rags of formality being for ever cast away, and the powers of the

world to come vividly felt, it shall be seen that our conversation and citizenship are in heaven; and that in very deed God dwells with man on the earth.

I. Diversity of human gifts and character is provided for in the mental and physical constitution of individuals, as fashioned by the hand of God.

Situation has, no doubt, its influence in enlarging and deepening this variety. Early associations insensibly entwine themselves around the heart, influencing the desires and tastes, and colouring the prospects of early life. Some follow the profession of their fathers without a strong original bias to determine their choice. Others are drawn into their sphere of activity by the remunerative openings and allurements of business. But after making due allowance for all the diversity produced by these causes, there still remains room and verge enough for a radical difference inherent in men from their birth. God does not leave this variety to the formation of casual influences, but lays the foundation of it deep in human nature. Apart from all local influence, personal suasion, and human culture, provision is made for a beautiful and magnificent diversity, both in nature and grace. Culture can improve and strengthen a native power, but it cannot originate what God has not implanted. Jacob and Esau come before us

with distinctive peculiarities from their childhood. Jacob's timid and quiet spirit would have shrunk from the perils of the chace, and the daring exploits of war, in which his bold and impetuous brother delighted. No training could have inspired the one with the spirit of the other, and have made them change places. They were originally stamped as different types of character. We behold those differences budding in children even when carried in their mothers' arms. In the young heart of Thomas Chalmers in the cradle, lay the seeds and germs of that noble and generous specimen of the sublime and princely aristocracy of mind. And in that vehement and ardent youth, before he felt the potent and plastic touch of grace, already existed the peculiarities and powers, the strong will and burning enthusiasm, which the Spirit of God sanctified; transforming the fervent aspirant to academic distinction into a humble, but zealous minister of the altar, ever serving God with the incense of Christ's merits in his hand. Not more truly did God bestow upon Saul the imposing stature, whereby he towered above all the people; or upon Samson the gigantic strength, that made him a host, and his name a terror to the Philistines; or upon Asahel the speed, that made him as swift of foot as the wild roe; than the rare gifts and graces, which distinguish the nobles of genius and the princes of

Zion, flow from the same sovereign Author of every good and perfect gift.

Even in early childhood, the innate tendency that betrays the latent gift begins to manifest itself, where no special training or encouragement is employed to draw it forth. When the gift is great, and amounting to genius, it burns like a fire in the breast of the possessor, and gives him no rest till it is exercised. It leads him by a way he knows not; and leisure and opportunities are pressed into its service. The mechanical bent of the mind, for example, is often indicated by the use which a boy makes of his knife, in dealing with a piece of wood accidentally coming in his way. He instinctively moulds it into a particular form; and derives peculiar satisfaction from approximating the model present to his mind. Sometimes the innate power is so very strong as to force its way through formidable difficulties and discouragements. Like a vigorous plant, it pierces the clods, and bursts into triumphant beauty. This was the case with Ferguson, who, when a herd-boy, and while tending the cattle, with no instructor but his own fertile genius, constructed a clock with wooden wheels, whose motions were so exact as to tell him the hour of the day. The same peculiarity distinguished Carey, the eminent Baptist missionary, who, while yet a shoe-maker, had acquired no mean knowledge of four foreign languages, as a pre-

paration for executing the sublime purpose even then glowing in his devoted heart, of taking up his abode among the swarthy sons of India, to proclaim to them the glorious gospel, and translate the Scriptures into their vernacular tongues. Need I mention the name of the illustrious Burns, around whose memory such a melancholy splendour is shed. Oh! that he had dedicated his rich racy genius to the same holy object to which Cowper consecrated his. His sun went down while it was yet day; but how dark and portentous was the setting, compared with the promise and the glory of the rising! God lodged in his breast the true poetic fire; but the receiver sadly abused the gift of his Maker. Forth the flame of poesy burst before there was the breath of popular applause, or the knowledge of great models, to fan it. The bird of nature, taught no artificial strain, spontaneously "warbled his native wood-notes wild." The voice of deep thrilling poetry gushed from the lips of the simple and warm-hearted ploughman; while rustics wondered; and lords and ladies at last were constrained to praise and admire. Alas! that he lost so soon the inspiration he caught under his pious father's lowly roof. Evil influence corrupted him and led him astray. Those who ministered at the altar, and should have encouraged him to bend the knee, and consecrate his genius to the service of God and the good of man, tempted

him to sit in the seat of the scorner, to shoot his profane arrows into the holy temple, and minister to the evil passions of the human heart. He had a great gift, and missed a golden opportunity. He had the command of the popular ear; he felt the nation's pulse, and knew the way to Scotland's heart; and instead of penning the song of the drunkard, and gilding the path of sin with his golden images, he might have enriched the songs of Zion; embalmed his native tongue in strains that would never have crimsoned the cheek of modesty with a blush, nor have instilled impurity into the heart of innocence; but would have wafted their thoughts and desires heaven-ward. Rather should he have hung his harp upon the willows and wept, than sing to amuse the enslaver. Unhappy Burns! he became a wreck while still in his prime; and was laid in a dishonoured grave, when he might have been a high-priest among his countrymen, offering up in glowing verse a nation's gratitude and praise. He would have had ample scope for his rare powers without excursions into the forbidden ground of the profane and impure; and his laurels would have bloomed more sweetly, had they been entwined with the beauty, and enriched with the odour, of the Rose of Sharon.

Sometimes a man's gifts lie dormant till brought within the reach of some genial and quickening influence, that stimulates their growth and exer-

cise. The possessor is unconscious of what is slumbering in his breast; and his friends may see nothing to prognosticate the distinguished place he is to occupy, and the great work he is destined to do. His powers may not be precocious, but slow of development. Like seeds that are too deep in the soil to germinate, and after lying for years, at once burst into life when brought near the surface, where they imbibe the renovating influence of the atmosphere; the faculties of such persons sleep unnoticed, till aroused by some stirring event; or feeling the influence of suggestive and inspiring minds, that act upon them like the favouring breath of spring, they come forth with the rich promise of abundant fruitfulness. New powers are felt, which struggle into active energy, craving for food and exercise; as if to make up for their long silence and imprisonment. A spark falls on the soul, which kindles a flame never to be extinguished. The loins are forthwith girt, and the race entered, and the prize won. Such was the case with Sir Fowell Buxton, when a raw and uncultivated youth he was drawn within the radiant, accomplished, and happy circle of the Gurney family. He beheld the young, and the beautiful, and the gifted, earnest and devoted in improving their minds. Warm hearts, and busy hands, and eloquent tongues were there; and a sweet sunshine of love enlivened the scene. It

was as if he had been suddenly transported to a land of enchantment. A new world opened upon him, and new impulses began to beat in his heart. The unpolished youth, who had thought only of riding and shooting, caught the enthusiasm of his new friends; and encouraged by their approving sympathies, and stimulated by their example, he threw himself with ardour into the new sphere of labour, and took delight in mental toil. The gentle and kindly suavities of that rare domestic circle, smoothed his rough exterior, and brought into play lamb-like affections, to tame and direct the energy of the lion. His providential visit to that family was the turning point of his life. That social circle was a school in which he learned more in a few months than he had done for years. He became conscious of new powers. The young bird suddenly burst the shell, and learned to fly. He felt he could do what he had never before dreamt of. He embarked in a new career, and began to live for a new end. The contagious influence of those gifted young friends was the dawning of a bright day to his mind; it cheered him amid his struggles for academic honours; it followed him into the senate, and whispered hope and triumph in his benevolent and heroic efforts to strike the last link of the chain of bondage from the heel of the groaning and bleeding slave; and it lingered around him like an angel of light, till

full of the hope of a blessed immortality, he sunk to sleep amid the shadows of the tomb and the dawning glories of heaven.

The multiform variety, of which the foundation is laid deep in the constitution of human nature, is not destructive of the unity which pervades the works and government of God. The statuary of the sculptor, the creations of the painter, and the works of the architect, bear the stamp of the inventive minds by which they are produced. However varied in size, or form, or grouping, they are distinguished by a family likeness; and the practised and cultivated eye is not slow to discern traces of the characteristic genius of the author in all his productions. In like manner, under all the manifold dress of God's creatures, and the diversified collocations of His works, we discern clear and beautiful marks of the same affluent and Divine mind. The inexhaustible prodigality and diversity in nature are not the sowing and planting of different hands, but the wise and beautiful arrangements of one Being. They are marked by a Divine style and freedom; and are pervaded by a far extending unity, that tells us not of gods many and lords many, but of one living and true God. The various objects in the panorama of nature, and the diversity of gifts in the kingdom of grace, are not like the works arranged in a picture gallery, produced by different artists; but

they are parts of the same composite production, conceived and executed by a single mind. The fanlike vegetation of the tropics; the minute lichens of the regions of ice and snow; the ebony-faced members of the human family, as well as the fair and ruddy in other climes; the brilliant constellations of the heavens, differing from each other in glory; the distinctive peculiarities of individuals and nations; the distinguished in science, the giants in theology, and those who lead the van in the good fight of faith; are all harmonious parts of one magnificent picture, drawn and coloured by the same unerring hand, on a scale vast as the universe, and blending all their glory into one gorgeous whole. Every insect, and flower, and tree; every bird that cleaves the air, delighting us with its plumage, or making the grove vocal with its song; every hill and valley; every sea and river; every man with his gift honouring his Creator in the sphere in which his lot is cast; is a herald that, with a different tongue and costume, sounds forth the praises of the same God. The countless witnesses never contradict each other; the testimony of each is independent, but in substance one. To the discerning eye the image of God is visible in them all.

> "Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
> But all their hearts are one."

II. This law of diversity in gifts and graces, is eminently productive of beauty.

How tame and uninteresting would the face of the earth appear, were it adorned only with a single species of flowers, shrubs, and trees; were its mountains and hills all of one size and form; and were its rivers all to flow in the same uniform direction, and to roll on to the ocean with the same volume of water! The aspects of nature would be divested of their principal charms, the view of one scene would be the view of all; and we should be deprived of that inexhaustible source of delight which springs from the contemplation of objects varying infinitely in shape and hue. Outward objects would pall on the sense; and weariness would possess every beholder. The heart would sigh for a change, and would cast about for something to relieve the monotonous uniformity.

God has dealt more wisely and kindly by us, than to place us in such a position. He regales us with endless diversity. One star differeth from another star in glory, and one spot of the earth differeth from another in beauty; so that where there is an eye to see, an ear to hear, and taste to enjoy, He provides the materials of a perpetual feast. Relief is thus given to the aching mind by change of scene; and drooping health revives by the new influences it drinks in, the interesting ob-

jects contemplated, and the new trains of thought awakened in the mind.

There is a beauty also in the rich variety of gifts with which man is endowed. Where individuality is not repressed by the want of mental independence; where one is not the slavish and submissive echo of another; where the impression of God's seal is not obscured, and the native bent of the mind is not crushed; but where men appear in their true colours, and in their full proportions, there is great beauty in the diversity of their gifts and graces. Instead of being clipped and forced into artificial forms, they expand into free and natural loveliness. Here, is strength, and there, is gentleness; here, is courage, and there, is patience; here, is faith, and there, is humility; here, is meditation, and there, is activity; here, is calmness, and there, is fervour; here, is prayer, and there, is charity; here, is the gift to plan, and there, is the gift to perform. It is a delightful spectacle,—minds as various as faces; and a beautiful harmony in the variety,—rich music evoked from the many strings by the hand of God.

III. This variety of gifts is a fruitful source of utility to man.

1. This diversity provides the needful supplies for different spheres of labour.

Were only one style of gift to prevail, there would be a glut in one field of activity, and a dearth in another. One door would be besieged with applications, while another would be deserted. Some useful branches of knowledge would never be cultivated; some important professions would be abandoned; while others would be crowded to excess. Many employments would thus, like sinking ships, hoist signals of distress. At the same time, those minute subdivisions of labour, which facilitate despatch, and conduce to superior delicacy of execution, would not be provided for by corresponding qualifications and capacity. But by the immense diversity of talent, which God has distributed among mankind, the demands of a high and advancing civilization are met; while the various tastes, and manifold gifts, that are developed, contribute to the resources and enjoyment of society. Each individual pours in his stream of influence as a contribution to the whole. The talent of one person is the complement of that possessed by another. One can do what another cannot do, and can provide what another wants. Like the different members of the human family, each has his appropriate functions and sphere of action. One is furnished for one office, and another for another. One is an eye to the community; another is an ear; another a hand; and another a foot; all co-operating for the general good, and

conspiring to the safety and welfare of the social body; giving it bread to eat, and raiment to put on.

This law of varied distribution obtains also in the Church. "The Spirit divides to every man severally as He will." There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of administration, but the same Lord. It is thus arranged, that every part of His work may have willing hearts, and fit hands, to perform it. Some have a gift for organization in connexion with the external machinery of the Church; while others excel in dealing with the soul, and ministering to the inner life, which it is the design of the outward ministrations of the Gospel to create and sustain. The strength of some lies in their power of appeal to the conscience, in awakening and converting sinners; others are better qualified to guide, and feed, and comfort such as are already gathered within the fold. Some are armed for the arena of public conflict; while others find their most congenial element in calm meditation, and the quiet walks of private duty. Some are like the eyes to the body, their place is aloft on the watch-towers of observation; where they are quick to discern the signs of the times, and to suggest the proper remedy to meet the impending danger. Others are less fertile in plans, but they are hands and feet to the Church; being prompt, and skilful, and

zealous in execution. Some hold up the hands of Moses in prayer on the top of the hill; while others fight with the Amalekites in the plain. As in building the temple, some prepared the wood, and some cut and polished the stones; some bore burdens, and others were engaged in carved work; and by diversity of gifts, and division of labour, the magnificent structure rose in all its grand proportions, till the top-stone was put upon it with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it: so the spiritual temple of the Church of the living God, built of living stones—immortal souls, is rising under the eye of the Great Master-builder; while men of different gifts are helping forward the holy work, and carrying out the sublime plan of Divine wisdom and love.

2. Diversity of gifts tends to promote a sense of mutual dependence among mankind, and to cultivate friendly feelings.

This part of the Divine government is graciously designed to remove the partition-walls, reared by prejudice and selfishness between the members of the human family; and to draw closer the ties that should bind them together. Men are brought together by the felt need of each other's services. Instead of living in unsocial, isolated seclusion, independent of one another's efforts, they are taught to lean upon their respective contributions to the common stock. Intercourse is thus promoted be-

tween different nations, as well as between the inhabitants of the same country and city, for the purchase or exchange of their several productions and commodities. They see each other; speak together; learn to appreciate each other's qualities; to judge more charitably of each other's motives; and exchange offices of kindness. Antipathies and jealousies are softened down, and melt away under the salutary power of personal intercourse; and those, whom no reasoning could convince, and no appeals could move, are brought round by the interchanges of frank and familiar dealing. Hatred is thus converted into friendship, —and those who, ignorant of each other's character, would have been arrayed against one another in deadly hostility, shake hands as brothers, and stand shoulder to shoulder in defending a common cause. The bitter asperities of life are thereby softened; and a humanizing influence is shed upon the human heart. God thus breaks down the barriers which ignorance and passion erect between man and man; that they may look one another in the face; recognise the endowments with which His Divine hand has crowned them; reciprocate an elevating influence by the manifestation of their several excellencies; and touch one another's hearts by the exercise of kindness and goodwill.

The same benefit is enjoyed by this provision in

the kingdom of grace. Peter needs the aid of the gentle and chastening love of John; and the contemplative John is the better of the ardent activity of Peter; and they not only run together to the sepulchre, but go heart and hand together in the work of their common Lord. Paul's gifts made him, under God, a father to Timothy, and Timothy's graces made him a son to Paul; and they were mutual blessings, and loved each other as parent and child. Luther felt the want of the systematic and calm mind of Melancthon; and Melancthon could not do without the fervent and energetic soul of Luther; and they clasped each other as brothers in the Lord. Thus the helpers and the helped; teachers and scholars; the comforters and the comforted; the counsellors and the perplexed; are endeared to each other by the exercise of their respective gifts; and heart is drawn to heart by the sweet and quiet outflow of Christian love.

IV. Diversity of gifts gives us exalted conceptions of the glorious perfections and inexhaustible resources of God.

What affluence must be stored up in that Divine mind, which gave birth to this endless variety! Man is but at the threshold in investigating the wonderful secrets of nature; and every great work that is published, and every eminent Christian that

rises up, presents a new phasis of this manifold diversity. Each successive age is unlike its predecessor; and the present, though springing out of the past, has new features and aspects. None can prescribe limits to God, and say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." He has not to copy His own works from exhaustion; but every leaf He turns in His wonderful book, presents a page of fresh marvels to the eye. There is no end to His treasures. His gifts rival the starry hosts of heaven in number and variety. As we gaze upon this magnificent mirror of God's perfections, and behold thousands of forms and colours blended into one blaze of glory, what profound reverence should fill our hearts! Each variety says, Look at me; and think of and adore God, who made me. What bounds should there be to our gratitude, for such a vast profusion of mercies, all conspiring, if humbly used, to make us wiser, and better, and happier! What food have we here for faith! and what a reproof to distrust! Can *He* forget His own children who cling to His knees, and look up in His face, and cry to Him in prayer, who scatters abroad His gifts with so lavish a hand? Can *He* ever be at a loss? can His fountain run dry? can His supplies fail, who is higher than the heavens, and broader and deeper than the ocean; and who, countless years before man's creation, and every day since, never ceased to bestow new gifts? The

stream continues to flow without abatement; the series goes on without pause; and every link of the chain is unlike another. We live in a temple, whose solemn echoes awake at the tread of God's foot; whose innumerable symbols reflect his image, and call us to prayer and praise; and where mercies, falling thick as manna around the camp of Israel, should make the heart's swelling anthem rise on the wings of gratitude to heaven.

It behoves us, therefore, to fall in thankfully with this law of diversity; and not fight against God, by vainly and presumptuously trying to reduce all to a common level, and a tiresome uniformity, by making all speak with the same voice, and ever harp upon the same string; instead of unfolding the rich variety observable in the prophets and apostles. Each of us shall best fulfil the end of our creation and redemption, by an earnest consecration of our talent to God. Let His cause have the benefit of whatever He has bestowed; let us add to the diversity by faithfully drawing it forth, and laying it upon His altar. Let it be sanctified, but not neglected; pruned and trained, but not rooted out or trodden down; and then with Christ in the centre, like the tree of life in the midst of the garden, all around will be plants of righteousness of different forms, and colour, and size, conspiring together to glorify God, and enrich and ennoble man.

Thus are the various members of the human family fitted, by the loving and faithful exercise of their respective gifts, to swell the choral music which should ascend daily to God, from the grateful hearts and lips of His children. As different musical instruments and human voices, while each is distinguished by its peculiar sound, all unite in singing and playing the same tune, and conspire by their harmonious diversity to give greater richness and depth to the sublime melody; so old and young, with their several gifts and graces, are instruments and voices attuned and acting in concert, from which a more majestic anthem rises to the ear of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. God loves the music of harmonious action. His ear catches, and His heart welcomes, every note sounded by the feeblest instrument among His creatures; and when each person fulfils his vocation, and discharges his commission, as a servant of God, the swell of praise becomes far more sublime than the deep-toned bass of the mighty ocean; for the multitudinous band is not composed of a few individuals, but of all kindreds, and nations, and tongues: the heart of each is drawn by the magnetic influence of Divine love and majesty, and is instinct with the spirit of the song, "Glory to God in the highest."

"Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the earth!
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth with her thousand voices praises God."

CHAPTER IV.

RESPONSIBILITY.

MATT. XXV. 19.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

LUKE XIX. 13.

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

THE prominent idea in these passages of Holy Scripture, is that of the Responsibility of the servants to their Lord, who intrusts them with His goods. They are not at liberty to do what they please with their gifts; but are as truly amenable to Him in His absence, as in His presence. Their accountability is untouched by His being in a far country. This does not alter their relation to Him; nor weaken His claims to their faithfulness. What they receive, is not made over to them absolutely and unconditionally, as their own. They are not proprietors, but stewards; and nothing can relieve them of the obligation to consult His

interest; and to aim at fulfilling the end for which their talents are bestowed. In all places, and in all changes, He is still their Lord; and no power can deprive Him of the right to look after His own.

The language in Luke, addressed by the Lord to His servants at His departure, is borrowed from trading. It is a very solemn charge,—"Occupy till I come;" and literally means, Trade till I come. They are to deal with their gifts as merchants do with their capital; making it a source of profit, by a diligent use of the advantages it confers, and a steady and sagacious attention to the openings of trade, and the demand and supply of the market. He reminds them of His return to reckon with them, that the thought of the day of accounts may keep them faithfully at their post. He and they shall meet again. He will not forget what He had given them; nor omit entering into a strict reckoning. Nothing shall escape Him. He will review their proceedings, and subject everything to the test of His law. He will hold the mirror up in their face, that they may see themselves in the light of truth and righteousness. "The books shall be opened; and they shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works."

The branch of our subject, to which we shall now address ourselves, is that of man's responsibi-

lity. I will, accordingly, proceed to state and illustrate some of the arguments that go to demonstrate our accountability.

I. The material and animal creation is under subjection to the laws of God; and much more may we consider rational man to be so placed, who occupies a higher position in the scale of being.

The whole material universe is subject to law. Every part of God's magnificent system is a link in the chain of order and harmony. All the orbs of heaven move in their spheres in obedience to the will of the wise and obedient Creator; and keep their appointed places with the most exact precision. Even the wayward comets, which seem to have the mark of Cain upon them, as the fugitives and vagrants of the starry regions, are under the strictest order and discipline; and, in every step of their eccentric course, move at the bidding of the Supreme Ruler. Were there a Harmony of the Spheres, as fabled in olden times, not a wanderer would be absent from his place; but all would add their voice to the swelling anthem of praise. "The sun knoweth his going down;" and the moon never forgets the hour of her rising. Every particle of matter is under the authority of law. Worlds and atoms are alike ruled by the same dominion. Not a ray of light darts through the regions of space; not a wave

ripples the surface of the sea; not a sunbeam dances in fantastic gleams in the moving water; not a bud unfolds its beauty; not a bird wings its way through the air, or awakens the echoes of the grove with its song; but in obedience to the laws of God. From the eagle, "the playmate of the mountain-storm," to the insect, that dances away its brief existence in the sunshine, the law of instinct prevails, which is implanted by the hand of the Creator. As the planets revolve round the sun, the centre of their light and heat, and follow him in his majestic course; so the whole inferior creation is governed by the mysterious power of God, who binds and leads it by the laws He has established for keeping it in subjection.

Now, since there is not an atom of matter, nor an irrational creature, but what is under the dominion of laws suited to its nature, can we believe that man, who stands at the top of the ladder of existence on earth, is exempt from Divine authority, and not amenable to God? "The higher and more exalted the nature possessed, the more elevated and spiritual is the obligation to live and move in obedience to the will of Jehovah. Is man, who is so highly gifted, and so richly furnished, cast off from the restraint of all law, and left to be the sport of every wayward impulse and temptation? This would not raise him to dignity, but sink him to degradation. It would not make

him a god, or an angel, but a beast, or a devil. Such is not man's position. He is not thrown like a piece of wreck upon the waters; now drifting before the wind; now carried out and in with the tide; and now dashed by the foaming waves upon the rocks. He is related to God by laws suited to his rational, moral, and religious nature; and fallen though he be, and a restless wanderer from his appointed path, the meshes of the network of accountability enclose him, even at the utmost limit of his guilty roamings. He is bound though he fly; and the chain of obligation clanks behind him as he runs; and proclaims that, though out of prison, there is a power above him, which he has offended, and which he dreads to meet. He may struggle to be free, like a fish darting from side to side of the stream, and leaping out of the water, or plunging into deep pools, to get rid of the hook that galls and confines it; but the hook of God's law never loses its hold; and the line of human responsibility canot be broken; so that escape is impossible. God cannot be dethroned; His claims cannot be disannulled; and in hell, as in heaven, the duty of obedience exists in undiminished force. "Of law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as

not exempted from her power; both angels, and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the Mother of their peace and joy." (*Hooker.*)

Analogy would thus lead us to believe, apart from the evidence and authority of higher teaching, that no individual, great or small, is exempt from Divine law. Since every atom of matter, and every drop of water, obeys the law of gravitation; since, if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, we shall find its currents moving, its waters ebbing and flowing, by law, and the hand of God there leading us, and His right hand upholding us; since there is not a wreath of vapour but curls and ascends by law; and not a cloud encircling and canopying the setting sun, but has its bright edges enamelled by law; since there is not a scene that greets the eye, that is not beautified and presented to the mind by law; since there is not a sound that salutes the ear, but is wafted on the wings of law; since, if we pass into the remotest of the starry regions, we find, at the farthest bounds of thought and vision, the reigning and regulating power of law; can we, with the universe of law before our eyes, under our feet, and over our heads, believe that man is an anomaly and an exception to this all-pervading authority and subjection? Law is here; law is

there; and law is everywhere. We breathe by law; we sleep and wake by law. God's law is the clasp that girdles the universe, and keeps everything in its place. The earth we tread upon would be unstable, everything would rock and reel, without law. It keeps our foot firm, and our head erect. It is the talisman of order; the secret bond of union to the elements that compose the world; and constitutes the adamantine pillars, on which the globe rests secure amid the heavings of earthquakes and the fury of tempests. Mind is not less the subject of law than matter; the soul than the body. As every particle of matter is under the law of gravitation, so every soul is under the moral law of God; and bound to follow the attraction of Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Jehovah is the central sun; and all spirits should move in harmony around Him, attracted by His power, lighted and warmed by His influence, and ever following in His train. It is only by feeling their responsibility, and cordially responding to its claims, that they can move in their proper spheres, and fulfil the great ends of their creation. By cheerful subjection to the Lord they are free; they are made willing by His power; and resemble the river winding at its own sweet will, because His will and theirs are one. Thus, were all the individuals forming society attracted by the power of Jesus, the whole mass would move

in beautiful obedience to His kingly power; revolving, like the planets, in sublime order round the central orb of glory; constituting one finely regulated system and family; and presenting an august spectacle of collective harmony, and of individual beauty and freedom.

II. A sense of accountability is implanted in the human heart by the hand of the Creator.

There are, doubtless, persons whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron; who, drugged and debased by sin, are blind, and hardened, and devoid of the sense of responsibility. In this state of moral stupor and deadness John Newton was lying, when, as he afterwards confessed, he had so completely lost all sense of accountability by the blunting influence of his guilty career, that had he been taken away by death, he would have died like a lamb. Cases of this kind, however, do not invalidate our argument. Men may by the force of circumstances, and long indulgence in bad habits, so stifle their natural convictions, and silence the voice of God in their hearts, as to want all the nobler traces and instincts of humanity; but this no more disproves the consciousness of responsibility in the breast of man, than the physical diminutiveness of the degraded and Liliputian Bushmen of Africa, who live in holes, and feed on roots and reptiles, is evidence that such a small stature,

and revolting habits, are generally characteristic of mankind. A man may pluck out his eyes and cut off his hands; but though he wants those valuable members of the body, others have them, and he would have them too, had he not abused the gifts of God. Those sunk and debased specimens of human nature have mutilated their souls; they have put out the inward eye, and paralyzed the tongue of conscience, and have effaced the law written in the heart. They are inwardly maimed and mutilated; and are no true index of what others feel, whose hearts tell them that they are responsible to God, who made and who will judge them.

Nor are we to conclude that those, who deny man's responsibility, are destitute of all consciousness of it. Let persons of this stamp witness acts of revolting cruelty, or themselves suffer as victims of hard-hearted oppression, and the strong condemnatory language they employ betrays the existence of conscience within them, which they have smothered and buried. Their moral feelings, outraged by what they witness or experience, are roused into righteous indignation, and scatter their flimsy theories to the winds. Why do they appeal to heaven against their enemies, who would trample them under their feet like the mire of the streets, if men are not accountable? Why does their blood boil at the treachery of the assassin who lurks and

stabs in the dark? Why do they hurl burning sentences of reprobation against those who betray the confidence of the unsuspecting, and defraud and crush widows and orphans? Why do they ever reflect upon themselves, sit in judgment upon their own feelings, words, and actions, or find fault with others, if responsibility be a dream? Their own mouths condemn them. Their current vocabulary, their daily use of the terms, *right* and *wrong*, shows the hollowness of their boasted superiority to popular superstition. If there were any truth in their infidel creed, and did they act consistently with it, they would not find fault with any one. They would pity, but not condemn, those who deceived and robbed them. The injuries done to those whom they love, they would leniently ascribe to the influence of circumstances or natural temperament, and not to the guilt of the offenders. But this is far from being the case. Their hearts are at war with their heads. Their feelings, when aroused, protest against their reasoning. Every time they invoke justice against the criminal, is an abandonment of their position; and an acknowledgment that there is a Judge, at whose bar we must stand.

Besides, persons who have been brutalized by habits of licentiousness and ferocity, or are cold and sceptical under the tuition of an infidel philosophy, are seldom the same in the prospect of death

or under the pressure of danger, as they are when there is nothing to put their principles to the proof. Their cold and flimsy notions glitter like gossamer threads in the sunshine; but when the storm bursts, and the winds howl, their fine-spun web is blown to pieces. Many of those, who laugh at Christianity as a cunningly devised fable when the wind is fair and the sea smooth; and who seem prepared to take God into their own hands, as if He were too benevolent to call them to account; and who trace all the terrors of the judgment-seat, and all the gloomy pictures of eternity, to imposture and priestcraft; change their tone and bearing, when shipwreck with its appalling horrors is before their eyes. Their wailings are often the loudest, and their shrieks the most piercing, of all the sufferers. Their principles cannot stand the tug and strain of trial; but snap like rotten thread. Accordingly, dark scorching remorse has agonized many a man in the hour of peril, in whom the sense of accountability seemed to be extinguished at other times. His sins rise up before him like accusing spirits; anguish consumes him; bitter self-reproach stings and goads his guilty heart; and to his startled eye, and alarmed conscience, eternity is clothed with the thunders of retribution. His philosophic lamp, that was to serve him in such stead in the great crisis of life, goes out and leaves him in the dark; and conscience makes a coward

of him, so that he shudders, and would fain draw back from the edge of the precipice. He can contrive to live without religion; but he finds infidelity a poor thing to die with. The staff breaks in his hand, when he leans his weight upon it; and comfort fails him, when he needs it most. Such was the end of David Hume, the celebrated infidel. When his sceptical friends came to see him on his death-bed, he affected great gaiety of spirit, and indulged in unseemly jokes about Charon and his boat. They drew a flattering picture of his mild and happy death; and gloried in the triumph of infidelity as complete. But the whole truth was not known till afterwards. It required another hand to draw aside the curtain, and show us what happened behind the scenes. Long before the truth was known, an eminent writer had thrown out the suspicion, that those jokes "were of the same nature and for the same purpose, as the expedient of a boy on passing through some gloomy place in the night, who whistles to lessen his fear, or to persuade his companion that he does not feel it." The suspicion was well founded. The nurse, who waited on the dying philosopher, afterwards declared, that the gaiety and cheerfulness assumed in the presence of his friends, wholly forsook him when alone. There was then no sporting with sacred things, but fear and trembling. So appalling were the scenes she witnessed in the death-

chamber of the departing sceptic, that she declared, that no fee or reward would induce her to witness the last moments of another infidel. She might have said of Hume as was said by the poet of Marmion,

> "Many a death-bed have I seen,
> But never aught like this."

So deeply ingrained in the heart of man is the sense of accountability, that a process of retribution is constantly and silently going on under its influence. This inner law is self-acting. While the conscience of individuals bears witness, and their thoughts accuse or else excuse one another, the whole is indelibly recorded in the soul. The effect remains; and no power can obliterate or destroy the record. Every act of opposition to conscience, or of cordial concurrence and co-operation therewith, is written by the hand of an invisible scribe on the tablets of the heart. As a responsible being, man's heart is self-registering; and he goes down to the grave, and passes into eternity, with his history engraven in his own heart. All is preserved fresh and entire to the eye of Omniscience, as if written with a pen of iron. The fossil remains imbedded in the bowels of the earth, form a pictorial history of the past, and unfold the wonders of animal and vegetable life pertaining to ages long since gone by; and the concentric rings of trees, visible to every observer,

when they are sawed through, disclose their growth during each successive summer; and the breadth or narrowness of the rings proclaims to us whether the season was mild or ungenial. In like manner, could we read the hearts of men as God reads them, we should trace the legible characters written by the thoughts, affections, and actions, as they passed; and which form a secret and infallible history, which as part of themselves they carry about with them wherever they go; and which one day God will make manifest to the whole world. Conscience, as a faithful clerk, writes this hidden and mysterious history; and God Himself will publish it. Every man is a book, which is enlarging every day he lives; and it will be stereotyped, and continue unchanged after his death.

III. The prevalence of human tribunals of justice affords evidence of man's responsibility.

What mean the office of a judge, the trial of criminals, the sentences passed upon them, and the punishment inflicted, if man is not an accountable being? There is no proper authority for sitting in judgment upon others; it is arbitrary usurpation, an unwarrantable bridling of human freedom, if this doctrine be not true. If we are not accountable to God, still less are we accountable to man. Who dares to sit in judgment upon us, if this power does not belong to God? But the

necessity and propriety of human judgment-seats commend themselves to every unprejudiced mind. Every unjaundiced heart feels that there is such a thing as guilt, and that criminals should be condemned and punished. There are differences of opinion about the treatment of prisoners; about the proper blending of reformatory discipline with the penalties of the law; but the voice of the community is not divided about the righteousness of tribunals of justice, but pleads for them with emphatic clearness. The existence of a court of equity is the echo of the voice of conscience, declaring that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth. Every judge upon the bench, every pleading at the bar, every sentence passed, every prison for offenders, every scaffold erected for the execution of the guilty, proclaims the solemn truth, that man is responsible; and that punishment is the just award of crime. From year to year the administration of justice sounds forth the truth, which many would fain bury in oblivion. Every fresh outcry against crime, every feeling of disappointment when the guilty escape, is the bleating of a deep moral instinct, which would make man miserable, were he cut adrift from the moorings of responsibility; were his anchor lifted from the throne of the Eternal; and were he left to toss about, without chart or compass, on a dark and stormy sea.

IV. Man's responsibility is attested by the prevalence of sacrifice.

Whatever theory may be entertained regarding the origin of sacrifice—whether at first instituted by God, or springing from the deep yearnings of the human heart, no satisfactory explanation can be offered of its extensive prevalence, without recognising the principle of accountability to God. Under every sky this rite has been observed. By people differing from each other in dress, in manners and customs, in blood, in language, in laws and religion, has it been scrupulously adhered to. The immolation of animals, both expensive and inconvenient, could not have gained so wide a footing, and such a firm hold, in the world, had it not been sustained by a deep and ineradicable sense of responsibility to Heaven. This truth underlies all sincere worship, whether in its spirit and form true or false. To propitiate Divine wrath, and procure Divine favour, is the object of sacrifice; and would such pains have been taken, and such expense incurred, had man believed accountability a dream, and that nothing is to be hoped or feared from a power above us? The ignorant heathen, prostrating himself before the idol of his false god, and offering the bleeding victim on the altar, though deeply in error, reads a lesson to the votaries of a false philosophy, and proclaims to them the neglected truth, that man is a responsible crea-

ture. His profound conviction of this great truth utters itself in tremblings, in prayers, in gifts, and in blood. Every trembling fugitive, every smoking altar, and every bleeding victim, is a solemn and emphatic appeal against the disbelief of this doctrine. The echoes of the declaration are wafted from temple to temple. The altar to the unknown God unites with the church of the living God, to lift its voice to heaven in favour of this truth. The ruins of classic Greece and imperial Rome, the past and the present, barbarism and civilization, though differing in many things, agree in this, that in every region and age man is the subject of a Divine governor, whom he has offended, and whose curse is more awful than death.

V. Man is responsible, for without responsibility he is a riddle in the world.

Can it be conceived that a creature can be endowed with so many gifts, and crowned with so many favours, as man is, and yet not be accountable? Why is there such fear of death, if there is no retribution beyond it? Why such lofty aspirations, such longings for the blessings of immortality, if God does not honour and reward the faithful? Why those feelings that involve blame for the abuse of gifts, and the neglect of opportunities, if there is no Divine standard to judge by? Why do so many convictions and anticipations point to a

day of judgment, if such a thing be a dream? Are those yearnings and fears implanted in us only to deceive and make us miserable? Are those inward monitors, that point to a future reckoning, all false prophets? Do so many intimations point to this issue in vain? No, no. Man cannot rise to his true place in creation, without a judgment-day in eternity. He is fallen; but he is a fallen prince, and death is not his goal. The seal of immortality is still stamped upon his soul. He is linked to eternity; mortal, yet immortal. He is chained; but, like the imprisoned eagle, he longs to fly, and soar above the clouds. He walks among the ruins of former greatness, but he retains a dim remembrance of his origin; and his glistening eye sometimes turns to his true home above. The epitaph on his tombstone proclaims his greatness even in the grave. He cannot get rid of his relation to a Divine Ruler. His moral nature binds him to a moral Governor. He rules over others; and God claims rule over him. It is only in the future that we find an explanation of his present chequered life. It is only in his subjection to the Divine supremacy, that the mystery of his humanity is solved. "Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature."

> " How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
> How complicate, how wonderful, is man!
> And can eternity belong to me,
> Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour? "

Yes, it does. Without it, thou art worse than a dream, or a vapour. With it, thou art a ruler, yet a subject; at the top of creation, yet lying as a sinner at the feet of God. The enigma of thy being is cleared up. There is a future, to adjust the balance of present disorder; and thou, that minglest with the worms as a child of the dust, art rocked in the cradle of time, and put to school, to prepare for eternity; where God shall hold the scales with an even hand, and leave no account unsettled.

VI. Man is responsible, because the cordial and faithful acknowledgment of this truth is essential to the true greatness and excellence of nations and individuals.

Nations are little better than collections of physical atoms, if the individuals composing them are not bound together by the ties of faithfulness, by being bound to the throne of God by the ties of moral obligation. The sinews of a people are relaxed, and their morality low, when there is no fear of God before their eyes. A solemn sense of accountability to Him is the great spring and safeguard of their conscientiousness and integrity.

When self-interest is the ruling power in society; or when the fear of detection and punishment from man is the only dread and restraint, the national heart is shrivelled; the moisture of healthy vigour evaporates; the life-blood is tainted; the pure springs of benevolence are dried up; and the faithfulness, which requires no watching, and which no allurement can tempt to swerve from the path of uprightness, makes to itself wings and flies away. Hume the unbeliever, when consulted by a young man about entering the Church as a candidate for the ministry, though not believing her doctrines, advised him not to hesitate to take the contemplated step; as those who held such doctrines were no better than children, whom it was not wrong to humour and deceive. Were a nation made up of such characters, it would be rotten to the core. There could be no confidence, because no truthfulness. Suspicion would reign everywhere. The painted sepulchre, beautiful without, but foul within, would be the proper type of such a people.

Accordingly, a nation may have large material resources, a vast territory and army, and yet stand very low in all the elements of true greatness. When brute force puts its foot on the neck of justice; when might and not right is the order of the day; no matter what outward show and magnificence there may be, the whole fabric is hollow and unsound. It carries the seeds of dissolution in its

own bosom, and must go to pieces. Whereas, though a nation meet with reverses, and have to pass through the Red Sea of trial, if it be true to God, He will open to it a way of escape, and lead it out in triumph, filling its heart with thankfulness and its mouth with praise. If it sink under the weight of its sins, unless it repent, its case is hopeless; it sinks to rise no more. The dry-rot gets into its timbers, and it crumbles to powder. But if its heart be sound, and the King of nations be its pilot in the tempest, the good ship will righten; and though its spars be injured, and its sails torn, it will weather the storm. I would tremble for my country, if she should trample upon the sceptre of the Divine Sovereign, and throw off His allegiance; but I would never look upon her with despair, even though dark days should come, so long as she maintained her loyalty to the King of heaven. She would be great in her struggles; great in her poverty; great in her tears. Battling for God's truth and man's liberty and welfare, her scars would be honourable; and her drops of blood more precious than gold. Her laurels would be stained by no crime; and her trophies would be the blessings of the life that never dies. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people." God honours those who honour Him; and everywhere He stamps with the seal of His approval the

people in whose hearts His name is enshrined; and blesses them with a security and prosperity which we look for in vain in other regions of the globe.

This is as true of individuals as of nations. Personal excellence, which wins our love and extorts our admiration, is unattainable without the heart-felt recognition of the moral government of God. A man may have gigantic abilities, a fine and prolific genius, a ready wit, and great wealth, and yet be destitute of the noblest qualities of character, by denying his accountability to the Lord of the whole earth. He cannot rise to the true dignity of a man, till he feel himself allied to God as his Ruler and Father. The bravest hearts that ever beat, have been those that no dangers could appal, because they lived and endured in the belief, that there was a God above them, and a Judge within them. They were lifted above themselves by the consciousness that they served a Divine Master, who was not ashamed to own them; and who pledged Himself never to leave nor forsake them. His favour was life to them; and they were kind and faithful to man for His sake. They fought all the more valiantly against their temptations, because they fought under the banner, and under the eye, of the Captain of their salvation. Their conversation was in heaven, though citizens of earth; they were heroes among

their fellows; and humble as they were brave. They stood in the front ranks in the great battle of life; and faith upheld their hearts, while love and prayer were on their lips. They were great, not as the world calls greatness,—great in the fear of God and the love of man. They were the excellent of the earth, and far above all Greek, all Roman fame. Such a man was John the Baptist, who would not betray his trust, nor wink at sin, though, at the bidding of Herod, the gates of a prison should close upon him, and his head roll lifeless on the dungeon-floor. Such a man was Paul, great in soul though little in stature; who spurned the wealth and honours of the world for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; who shed tears of compassion over immortal souls; whose zeal no difficulties or dangers could quench; who toiled for others as if he had been toiling for his life; and at last sealed his testimony with his blood. Such were the men, who, in later times, had to take shelter in caves and among the mountains; who pined in the dungeon, died upon the scaffold, or expired in the flames of persecution. Their hearts would have failed, and their hands would have hung down, had they not endured as seeing Him who is invisible. It was the thought of His presence that kept them from sinking. And such are the leading spirits in the cause of benevolence, and the finest models of human ex-

cellence in our own day. They give as God's almoners; they live as His stewards; and walk through the world in fellowship with the Lord of the conscience; ennobled by His presence, and fashioned in His likeness. Herein lies a potent influence, that inspires the heart of man with exalted thoughts and desires; raises him in the scale of excellence; and teaches him to conquer himself, and quail before no foe.

VII. Responsibility is attested by the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible is addressed to man as a moral and accountable being. His responsibility is taken for granted and recognised, when not directly proclaimed. The idea of moral government is never lost sight of. It runs through woof and warp of the Divine web of revealed religion. It is written in sunbeams on every page of the oracles of God. It is entwined around every truth that grows in the Eden of inspiration. It looks at us out of every window of the sacred edifice, built by the Divine Architect, of doctrines, and precepts, and promises; adorned with the images of departed saints; and illumined with the presence and glory of the Son of God.

Man was introduced into the world under the authority of law, placed at once under the dominion of God as a moral Governor. At the

farthest verge of human history, at the earliest dawn of his existence, while yet gazing in innocence on the fragrant beauties of Paradise, we behold him a subject of the Lord of all. He sins, and in a moment the hand of retribution smites the offender, hurls him from his pre-eminence, dries up his enjoyment, and converts his garden-home into a prison. His fear is his torment. Guilt makes him fly. He is punished before God speaks to him. Haunted with dread, pale and trembling, he crouches, and tries to hide himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. He is brought from his hiding-place; he is arraigned and condemned; and being no longer fit for a place arranged and furnished for an innocent and obedient creature, God drives out the man.

Years pass away, and two sons gladden the hearts of the guilty and banished pair. Their offspring, though sprung from a corrupt stock, are amenable to their righteous Lord and Judge. The law of responsibility is not abrogated. The spirit of moral dominion is not asleep. God's title to rule and receive homage is acknowledged by the two brothers. Cain presents a thank-offering of the fruit of the ground; and Abel lays on the altar a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock. The younger brother approaches God in faith, and is accepted; the elder brother lacks the spirit of faith in his

worship, without which it is impossible to please God, and is rejected. His countenance falls; a dark cloud gathers on his brow; and rancorous envy poisons his heart. Hatred is kindled in his breast against his godly brother, because favoured with the blessing of God. Resolved upon revenge, he watches his opportunity; and finding Abel one day in the fields, out of the sight and hearing of his parents, carefully looking round and seeing no one near, he raises a deadly instrument in his murderous hand, and smites him to the ground. The earth is crimsoned with the blood of the pious youth; but the heart of the fratricide is not melted. He leaves the spot, probably after burying the mangled body, and makes no confession of his guilt. The hour at which Abel was wont to appear comes round, but the sound of his foot is not heard, and no trace of him is seen. Adam and Eve inquire at Cain, but he denies all knowledge of his missing brother. The anxious parents look and look, but the lost one comes not. The stars shine out bright and clear over their heads, but sorrow clouds their hearts; for their family star is gone. The sleepless night passes, and the day comes; but their dwelling is still dark; for Abel is away. No tidings of him arrive. A mysterious darkness hangs over his fate. All is shrouded in impenetrable gloom. Where is the witness to point out the murderer?

and where the power that shall avenge the innocent youth's blood?

That dark crime shall not go undetected, or unpunished. No mortal has seen the unnatural deed; but God has seen it, and will proclaim it; and place the criminal at his bar. Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth; and though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. The laws of the righteous Ruler have been basely trodden in the dust; and He takes the case into His own hand, and drags the culprit to light and to justice. A Divine voice startles the guilty Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother? What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." The bolt is shot, which does not miss its mark, but flies red-hot into Cain's heart. He thought himself secure, because no mortal saw him commit the crime; but the Avenger of blood is upon him, and he cannot escape. The outraged majesty of Divine justice flashes out upon him in flames like to blind and consume him. He is driven from the presence of the Lord, crushed and groaning under

the burden of his guilt. His awakened conscience mutters thunder in his ears, and waves, as with a seraph's hand, the flaming sword before his eyes. He finds himself in the grasp of one who can crush him like a worm; and helpless and trembling he quails before God, and sobs out his misery in the mournful words, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

As we descend the stream of sacred history, we find the moral government of God manifested on a still larger scale. It never ceases to extend its sway to individuals, for it allows none to escape in the crowd; but it unfolds itself in peculiar majesty, in solemn and awful grandeur, when it asserts its righteous dominion over large masses of mankind. As man spreads in the early history of the world, sin accumulates. Like a falling stone, the farther man descends, the greater is the momentum of depravity, and the more rapid his speed. Instead of winning his way higher and higher up the path of knowledge and purity, leaving his former self behind at every step, as the fond and self-complacent dreamers of human dignity and perfection love to paint him; he loses ground, lets go his hold of much that his Creator had taught him, and corrupts what he retains. His knowledge is made an instrument of impiety. He sits in the seat of the scorner, and mocks at things Divine. Iniquity rises and spreads

like a flood, and sweeps over the land-marks of morality and religion. God is defied, and the weak are oppressed. Society is rotten at the core; and its outward grace, like the deceptive beauty of the apples of Sodom, hides but dust and ashes. The eye of the righteous Lord beholds the revolting spectacle, and His heart condemns the profane and licentious transgressors. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." He warned and entreated, but the bold, unblushing offenders would not listen. "They were like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Noah, a preacher of righteousness, was sent to speak to them; but they laughed him to scorn. The cup of their iniquity was full. Insulted majesty would bear their provocations no longer. The hour of doom has struck. The word of command was given to the waters above and below, to unite their forces and punish the rebellious race. The avenger caught them at their marriage-feasts, and interrupted their godless revelries. Their bridal dresses were their winding sheets. The sound of music ceased, and gave place to shrieks and wailings. Merry faces grew pale. Those who were tripping it in the dance, stopped, listened, and fled for their lives. They sought the heights,

but the water followed them. The faithful messenger of an angry God was after them, and denied them all respite. Wild cries to heaven were not regarded. The work of death went on among the affrighted multitude, huddled together in terror, weak and helpless, when smitten by the wrath of God. The flood swept over them; down they sank to rise no more; and nothing at last was heard but the "bubbling cry of some bold swimmer in his agony."

Tracing the course of Biblical history still further down, we never lose sight of the presence and power of the righteous Ruler. However muddy and turbid the current of human events, though rolling in waters reddened with blood to the ocean of eternity, He is seen walking on the waters. However violent and destructive the tempests of human passion, He rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm. Amid the din of battle, His deep, solemn voice is heard. In judgment and mercy He makes Himself known. He smites Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven; and burying them beneath the waves, He makes the waters of the Dead Sea chant their funeral dirge, and proclaim their guilt to an awe-struck world. In His dealings with His chosen people He makes the very wilderness a Bible, on which to write His law; and causes mountains and rocks, and rivers and wells, to sound forth as with a trumpet's

tongue the great truth that He "cannot look upon sin, and will by no means clear the guilty." By His judgments He strikes them down when they rebel, and their bones are left in the desert; and by His love they are cherished, and by His power they are defended, when they trust and obey Him. His righteousness is now traced in flames of fire; and again in mercies sweet and cheering as the morning light. In His faithfulness He puts them in possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, where they sit, each under his vine and under his fig tree, with none to make them afraid; but when they forget that the Lord is their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer, He puts His finger upon the springs of the Babylonian empire, and brings a royal officer to punish them; and tearing them from their homes and their comforts and privileges, conducts them in chains to a foreign land, to groan and pine in captivity. There their sin found them out; and the iron entered their soul. The taunts of their idolatrous oppressors smote them to the heart, when they were asked for their amusement to sing them one of the songs of Zion. The image of their beloved country, and of their glorious temple, and tender thoughts about their former homes, once nestling in beauty, the abodes of joy and plenty, but now desolate and trodden down by the foot of the spoiler, filled their hearts with sorrow; and hand and tongue refused

to do their office. "By the rivers of Babylon, there they sat down, yea, they wept, when they remembered Zion. They hanged their harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." They were melted and bowed down with grief. Not a note was struck, not a sound was heard, but the sobs of their wounded hearts.

After that dark and galling season came to an end, and the land for which they sighed was revisited, and the waste places built up, the old rebellious spirit broke forth again, and drew down fresh judgments upon their heads. God, who maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, awoke the power of Rome, and a Roman army encompassed Jerusalem. "Without were fightings; within were fears." The formidable foe spread slaughter from without the walls, and bitter feuds and gaunt famine raged within the gates. Their doom was sealed; and resistance was vain. Jehovah, who had often fought for them, fought against them that day. The city was taken, the temple burned, the Roman eagles floated over the walls, and the triumph of the conqueror was graced by the noble and the beautiful of the nation walking as captives in his train. From that memorable day to this, the history of that people, scattered and peeled,—a proverb and a by-word among all nations,—distinct yet mingling with Gentiles everywhere,—branded with a visible curse, though destined yet

to achieve a great work in the providence of God, proclaims in a voice of thunder the dominion of a righteous Governor on earth. The bell rings at every stage of their marvellous journey by an invisible hand; and long, long it has been swinging slow with solemn roar, and making the whole world echo with the truth, "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble."

Nor is this solemn truth less visible in the life and sufferings of Him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. In the temple, when but a boy twelve years old, He gave utterance to His profound sense of His accountability as the Son of man, and of the sacred obligations under which He lay,—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" As our Substitute and Redeemer, He never lost sight of what became Him as a subject of God's moral government. "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is day; for the night cometh, when no man can work." And when He laid down His life a ransom for many, and died as our High Priest and atoning sacrifice,—the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,—He gave the most emphatic testimony the world ever saw to the title and claims of a God of righteousness.

He not only sealed with His blood the covenant of grace, and secured a new charter of liberty for us; but, by consenting to die in our stead, He gave the most solemn sanction to the equity of the doctrine, that the wages of sin is death, and that God is just, even when justifying the ungodly. Responsibility was written on His cross; it was breathed forth in His prayers; it was whispered in His sighs; and it spake in drops of blood. What an inflexible law must that be, which said, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow!" What a righteous God must that be, that did not spare His own Son, when on that innocent Lamb were laid the iniquities of us all.

Not less distinct is the voice of Scripture in its teaching on this point, than are the acts of God's government on earth. The most perfect harmony subsists between the doctrines taught and the deeds done. From Genesis to Revelation the teaching is clear and consistent. From Mount Sinai in the wilderness the same truth sounds forth from the mouth of Jehovah, as from the lips of Jesus from Mount Tabor. Throughout, man is taught to walk before God and be perfect; to tread the earth, and think, and speak, and act, as under the eye of God. He is to endure, to be fortified and sustained in his encounters with trouble and temptation, as seeing Him who is invisible. And when

we enter the pure and calm and sunny region of the Gospel, every truth and influence there conspires to induce us to walk by faith, and not by sight. Everything in that sacred field is a mirror of God. Every sound reminds us of His name. Every promise is radiant with His love. Every mercy is running over with His fulness. Christ, in His teaching, not only draws us to the cross for salvation, but He also points beyond the grave to the judgment-seat. After death is the judgment. There, in the mysterious region of eternity, stands the great white throne. The books are opened; the Judge is at the door; and every one of us must stand before that holy and august tribunal, to receive the things done in the body, whether they have been good or bad. The spiritual is ever near. The chain of moral obligation is never relaxed. While walking among the fading scenes of time, we are enveloped in the folds of eternity. We stand on holy ground; and go in whatever direction we may, every step we take brings us nearer the judgment-seat. This is the centre of the great moral circle; and along whatever radius we move, we come to this point at last. Thither all the millions of mankind are moving; an irresistible power draws them along; and though many of them may shut their eyes, and refuse to think about their destination, none of them stands still a moment; but night and day they are on the

road to the solemn tribunal of the Judge of all the earth. Though taken up with their separate pursuits, and running to and fro intent on the objects of personal ambition; all are tending in this direction, and are being concentrated by an overruling hand. As the earth, in its annual and daily motions, carries all its inhabitants with it, though travelling in different directions; so the moral system, to which we belong, carries us along in its majestic course. "And yet it moves," whispered Galileo, after subscribing his recantation that the earth moves round the sun; and after the unbeliever denies his responsibility, still he moves at the command of moral power. None shall be absent from the judgment-seat. There the rich and the poor shall meet together; for the Lord is the Maker and the Judge of them all.

These considerations may suffice to show us what is man's true relation to God. Though fallen and rebellious, he is not freed from obligation. He is a prisoner at large; his sentence is respited, but not cancelled; and though wandering in the enemy's country, and serving a usurper, his lawful Lord still claims and exercises jurisdiction over him. He is allowed great scope; but there are bounds which he cannot pass, and fetters which he cannot shake off. Physical and moral barriers set limits to his freedom, and say to him, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." He is virtually

hemmed in on every side; and is surrounded by many checks, and met by many monitors, to remind him of his obligations to Him who reigns in heaven and on earth. In many a narrow and forbidden path he is stopped, as if by an angel with a drawn sword in his hand. At one time, he is startled by a strange, solemn voice in his own breast. At another, he is warned as a trespasser off a forbidden field, by the stern voice of law. While walking in a visible world, he is skirting the edge of an invisible one, with which he is mysteriously connected. He sometimes feels as if spies were dogging his steps, and piercing eyes, like flames of fire, were looking at him. He cannot break the chain of responsibility that binds him; nor leap the walls of his prison, and escape. His reasoning and boasting cannot snap those links that are stronger than iron, strong as almightiness, and lasting as eternity. The hand of God holds the chain of obligation; and no power can pluck him out of that hand. Responsibility springs out of the very heart of his moral nature, and can only be destroyed with the eclipse of reason. Conscience, as God's vicegerent, struggles to regain the throne of the heart, from which it has been deposed, and alarms him with trumpet-blasts of coming woe, for treason against his Sovereign Lord. All punishment is not reserved for the future. There is immediate retribution. The Avenger is

ever at work, and finds His machinery all ready, in the constitution of the soul and the framework of the body. The apparatus is complete. Its wheels, and cords, and checks are all in working order, and inflict punishment on the offender. Sin entails suffering upon the soul and body. Impaired health, poisoned affections, the pangs of remorse, the stings and arrows of self-torture, proclaim that man is in the hands of a Being who hates sin, and will beat the transgressor with scorpions, if the application of the whip does not arrest him in his wickedness. The deeper he plunges into iniquity, the more signal the chastisement. A fire is kindled in his breast, which prostrates and consumes him. A mark is set upon him; so that like Cain he fears at last that every one that meets him will slay him. He is not only a law unto himself, but an executioner unto himself; and wounds and burns himself by his sins.

The penalty is so acute and appalling in some cases, as to be painful to contemplate. The law of self-acting retribution is so fruitful of anguish and degradation, that were an imaginary picture drawn in equally dark colours, it would be denounced as grossly exaggerated and unreal. Of this we have a melancholy example in the case of Coleridge, described in his own burning words, as if his pen had been dipped in sulphur. With his own hand he lifts the veil, and throws a lurid light

on his miserable condition. He presents to us a dire spectacle of prostrate greatness, of a rich and powerful mind writhing and groaning in the iron grasp of a pampered and voracious habit. We behold Samson shorn of his locks, with his eyes put out, bound with fetters of brass, and grinding in the prison of the Philistines. An aspiring and giant spirit is chained to a rock, and vultures tear and prey upon him, while agonized with shame and horror he fills the air with his groans. The prison and the jailer, the chains and the lash, were all found united in the mysterious framework of his own being; where he was goaded and crushed as by the power of Omnipotence. No external change could relieve his anguish. The sweetest and serenest influences played around him in vain. The very breath of friendship, and the smiles of innocence, gave him pain. Tokens of kindness from pitying hearts deepened the sense of his debasement and misery. He could not fly from punishment; for he could not fly from himself.

"Conceive a poor miserable wretch who for many years has been attempting to beat off pain, by a constant recurrence to the vice that reproduces it. Conceive a spirit in hell, employed in tracing out for others the road to that heaven from which his crimes exclude him! In short, conceive whatever is most wretched, helpless, and hopeless, and you will form as tolerable a notion

of my state, as it is possible for a good man to have.

"I used to think the text in St. James, that 'he who offended in one point offended in all,' very harsh; but I now feel the awful, the tremendous truth of it. In the one crime of *Opium*, what crime have I not made myself guilty of!—Ingratitude to my Maker! and to my benefactors; injustice! *and unnatural cruelty to my poor children!* self-contempt for my repeated promise-breach, nay, too often, actual falsehood!

"After my death, I earnestly entreat, that a full and unqualified narration of my wretchedness, and of its guilty cause, may be made public, that, at least, some little good may be effected by the direful example!"

Writing to a different person from the friend addressed in the above extract, Coleridge says:

"You have poured oil on the raw and festering wound of an old friend's conscience, Cottle! but it is *oil of vitriol.* I have but barely glanced at the middle of the first page of your letter, and have seen no more of it—not from resentment, (God forbid,) but from the state of my mental and bodily sufferings, that scarcely permitted human fortitude to let in a new visitor of affliction.

"The object of my present reply is to state the case just as it is—first, that for ten years the anguish of my spirit has been indescribable, the

sense of my danger staring, but the consciousness of my guilt worse—far worse than all! I have prayed, with drops of anguish on my brow; trembling, not only before the justice of my Maker, but even before the mercy of my Redeemer—'I gave thee so many talents, what hast thou done with them?'"

This line of argument is not to be set aside by an unnatural separation of law from the Divine Lawgiver. The handwriting on the wall is traced by an invisible Ruler, to whom the hand belongs; and the sight of it may well make the cheeks of the profane revellers grow pale, and their limbs tremble. That is a shallow and godless philosophy, which would banish God from His own universe, and make Him an exile from His own laws. Those laws are wise because He framed them; and beneficial because He works them. They are the expressions of His will, and the instruments of His jurisdiction. They embody His mind and purpose; and are the conductors of the power by which He moves and controls His creatures. The warnings they give are the sounds of His voice; and the punishment they inflict has the seal of His approval. His presence and activity in those laws is not a welcome thought to those who do not like to retain the knowledge of Him, and who would strike out His name and efface His image from His works; but every

physical and moral law lives, and moves, and has its being in Him, and derives from Him its soul and force. It is His sentinel to keep guard; it is His trumpet to sound an alarm; it is His lash to smite; it is His shield to defend, and His light to shine. Wherever it is, He is. Whatever it does, He does. Whatever it gives, He gives; and whatever it takes away, He takes away. He sets His bow in the cloud, when by the laws of nature it spans the sky with its graceful arch resplendent with brilliant colours; and He pours His joy into the heart, when obedience to the moral law produces satisfaction, and evokes the music of an approving conscience. All takes place within the domain of His moral government; and as righteous Ruler He reigns supreme, ever keeping the reins of dominion in His own hand. He makes the winds His messengers, the flaming fire His minister, and law His handmaid. He sits behind the veil, and with an invisible hand pulls the strings; and we should ascend from what is seen to Him whom no man hath seen or can see; and remember that it is with Him we have to do. As a personal, conscious, intelligent, holy, watchful, and ruling God, He is everywhere present; and will have to do with us, whether we will or not. We are ever within His dominions; and His laws are the King's proclamations, to remind us of the loyalty we owe Him, and to warn us of the

danger of living without God in the world, and of doing what seemeth good in our own eyes. Every law is an appeal to us from heaven, and says, Remember the *Lawgiver*, for He will not forget *you*. It is a herald, that proclaims the approach of the Great King, and summons us to acknowledge His presence by falling down and worshipping Him. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

There are some additional points of this great subject, on which I shall touch in a few miscellaneous remarks.

1. The Word of God is the grand instrument for cultivating the sense of responsibility, and educating man in its exercise.

The pure and gracious religion taught in the Bible, has never failed to generate a deep sense of sin in every heart where it has had sway, and to nourish and fortify a lofty spirit of accountability. Behold with what sublime dignity it looks forth upon us, in the face, and language, and actions of the youthful Joseph, when plied with the blandishments and allurements of seductive temptation, —"How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" The fear of God kept him from falling, in a position where thousands have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Mark the calm and heroic bearing of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, in the presence of king Nebuchad-

nezzar, when threatened with the flames of the fiery furnace if they would not worship the golden image which he had set up. They preferred to face the devouring fire rather than encounter the stings of remorse, and the withering frowns of an angry God. "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Mark the devout and unwavering spirit of Daniel, humble amid courtly splendour; uncorrupted by the highest offices and rewards; faithful to his God amid corruption, perfidy, and idolatry. When he learned that his envious and treacherous enemies had obtained king Darius' sign-manual to the law that was intended to involve him in ruin, and which led to his being thrown into the lion's den, no sign of faltering appeared in his demeanour; no increased precautions were taken to conceal his devotions, and his renewed breach of the royal decree. Undaunted by the dread prospect before him; unshaken in his purpose of unflinching loyalty to the King of kings; with serenity in his countenance and peace in his heart; conscious of integrity, with no timid and noiseless step as if fearing detection, "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Mark the noble be-

haviour of Peter and John, after being brought out of prison, and threatened with additional severity for their adherence to Christ. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Follow Paul and Silas into the prison at Philippi, and what do you see and hear? Though they are smarting from their stripes, and their wounds are neither washed nor mollified with ointment, they are not cast down. They express no regret for maintaining the cause of Christ, which has brought upon them reproach, captivity, and stripes. They utter no complaints, and never think of compromising their principles to procure their release, and provide against future trials. Conscience approves of their course; and they will not yield a hair's breadth, come life, come death. Love to their crucified and exalted Lord constrains them by its sweet control to present themselves living sacrifices upon His altar. With their feet in the stocks, their hearts are free. Their wounded bodies are bleeding, but the balm of Gilead is poured into their souls, and they are healed. They suffer, but they feel no fear, and shed no tears. No groans or lamentations are heard from their cell; but sounds of prayer and praise. At midnight the prisoners are startled from their slumbers, and the echoes of the prison

are awaked by strange sounds in such a place. No shriek of remorse makes the blood run cold. No wild, plaintive sound brings the tear into the eye of pity. The solemn voice of prayer rises on the ear, and swells through the gloomy building; and manacled criminals listen with awe and wonder. Thrilling notes of joy and thanksgiving bespeak the happy hearts, that move the well-tuned tongues from which they flow. Their heavenly Father is visiting His children, and turning night into day. The dungeon has become a Bethel, the house of God, the gate of heaven; and angels catch up the song, and prolong it, and blend its notes with the melodies of heaven.

Thus over the wide range of so many hundred years, and in circumstances and localities greatly different, we see the truth of God's Word educating the spirit of responsibility, and rendering it sturdy and unconquerable amid powerfully counteracting influences, and in the prospect of appalling dangers. While courtiers and philosophers are bowing in the house of Rimmon; and to save their heads, their emoluments, and dignities, are taking part in a worship which their hearts condemn; the disciples of the religion of the Bible present a bright array of heroes and martyrs, whom no bribe nor threat can tempt from the straight line of conscientiousness. Truth is a jewel they will not sell for any price. They will

not barter their loyalty to God for all the rewards and honours kings can bestow. They stand erect, while others bow down to idols; among the faithless faithful only they.

This educating influence was not confined to periods of inspiration. We behold it working after the last of our Lord's apostles had sealed his testimony with his blood. When philosophers, orators, statesmen, and poets were burning incense on the altars of paganism, and sanctioned in public a false system of worship, which they laughed at in private, the followers of Jesus stood true to the Lord of the conscience, and lifted up their testimony by their words and their blood on behalf of truth and righteousness. When one fell, another standard-bearer stepped forward to take the colours, and unfurl the broad banner of the Covenant, and hold it up in the light of heaven before the eyes of men. Look at Polycarp in the hands of the Roman proconsul. "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar, and I will release thee: reproach Christ." Listen to the noble and touching reply of the venerable saint: "Fourscore and six years have I continued serving him, and he hath never wronged me at all; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" In a few hours the old man's body fed the flames of the martyr's pile. Witness the sublime bearing of Luther before the Diet of Worms, in the presence

of the Emperor, unawed by royal state and the appalling array of princely and priestly enemies. He took his life in his hands on that memorable day; for few thought that he would escape the paw of the lion. When asked to retract, the Reformer replied, "Unless I be overcome by the testimony of Scripture, or by clear and plain argument, I may not, cannot retract, inasmuch as it is neither safe nor right to violate my conscience. Here I stand, and cannot do otherwise, so help me God." As we trace the history of the Bible downward, we still descry the lamp of responsibility burning amid surrounding darkness, in spite of every effort to put it out. We see Latimer and Ridley and other kindred spirits faithful torch-bearers of this truth in England; and the covenanted wanderers on the wild heaths of Scotland members of the same illustrious band. We see it glowing in the breasts and irradiating the countenances of young and delicate women, who will rather die than sin. We see it in those, in our own day, who leave all for Christ, and will not sell conscience for a piece of bread. This spirit of accountability to God is the noble triumph of the religion of the Bible, wherever it is planted and takes root. The Gospel sheds on history a new glory, and kindles in man's heart the seraphic fire of heaven. Infidelity has no such trophies to show. The course of that foul spirit is tracked in

desolation and death. It puts out the lights of truth and righteousness; and kindles the baleful fires of hell, that burn blue and make our path more gloomy. It gives us a temple without a God; a home without a father; and sinks man to a level with the brutes, to invest him with the dignity, and introduce him to the bliss, of a god.

There is no force in the world like that of the Gospel, in enlightening and strengthening the conscience, and bringing into healthy and active play all the affections that radiate from it, and serve it as a body-guard. The Word of God is the celestial whetstone for giving a fine edge to the moral feelings. It elevates the tone of a man's mind so soon as it gains the mastery over him; makes him feel the powers of the world to come; and exercises his senses to discern good and evil. The commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes. "The word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." It supplies man with a sublime moral standard in every sphere of life; presents for his imitation a perfect model of character; plies him with the most powerful motives, and sustains and animates him by the aid of the Spirit of God. Even when there has been moral correctness before coming under its sway, it enlarges immensely

the range of moral sensibility, as well as gives greater sharpness and distinctness to the objects within its sphere. We have a striking example of this expanding and ennobling influence in the life of the late Dr. Reid of St. Andrews. He was allured into the wilderness to hear the voice of God. With a fatal disease in his tongue, he was forced to be a silent and lonely man. His neglected Bible became his favourite and daily companion; and by quiet and solemn communion with its truths, by the Cumberland Lakes, he was led to the knowledge and love of that adorable Saviour, whose matchless power had never drawn and conquered him before. His heart was touched in his lonely walks and solitary musings. The pride of science was brought down. Once he flattered himself that he had unanswerable philosophical objections to prayer, but they all melted away like mists before the rising Sun of righteousness. His awakened heart and aroused instincts scattered his arguments like cobwebs, and he sat down as a little child at the feet of Jesus, and behold! he prayeth. A grateful sense of responsibility to Christ lifted him into a new region. He owned allegiance to a new Master, and rose to a rare dignity and nobleness of spirit. Sublimely and calmly did his sun go down; and the gathering clouds of death were lighted up with brilliance by

the glory of his setting rays. The love of Christ made all things new to him.

> "Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb!
> The grand morality is love of Thee!"

Such is the benignant and purifying influence of the Word of God, and of the Divine religion which it teaches, wherever it obtains a vital lodgment in the heart. A higher tone of thought and feeling springs up under its sway. The soil lately parched and barren is covered with a mantle of green, and clothed with flowers of moral beauty. Religious affections shoot up, and blossom and bear fruit, under the fostering hand and genial breath of the Holy Spirit. Brought nigh to God, and warmed by His love, and elevated by the consciousness of His friendship, man rises to a position of dignity, tempered with meekness and humility. He feels himself to be something, and yet nothing; unworthy of the crumbs that fall from his Master's table, and yet seated beside Him at a banquet of loving fellowship, among those who are kings and priests unto God. Drawn upward by the cords of love, and made a partaker of the Divine nature, he scorns the husks on which he fed; and sets his affections on things above. "It was thus," says an eloquent and philosophical writer, "that the individual was lifted up from his obscure place, as a unit in the mass of

humanity, and was raised to his true position, and was invested with his proper dignity, as related individually to God. It was thus, that the meanest of the species, the slave, the outcast, did at length secure for himself and for his peers, of all times and countries, a formal recognition of his *rights* and *worth*, as the equal, in a moral estimation, of the noble and the learned."

Seeing, then, that the religion of the Bible is the great educator of responsibility, by enlightening the conscience, renewing the heart, and teaching man to recognise and feel a new and solemn relation to God; what shall we say of the recklessness and folly of those, who would dethrone the Word of God from its rightful sovereignty over us; and interpose barriers between the human soul and its quickening and healing truths? Many high-sounding pretenders,—the disciples of a shallow philosophy, and a pliable religion, which they can doff and don as easily as the hat upon their head,—would allure us from the wells of salvation, which refresh the weary soul of toiling and struggling humanity, and keep the heart of a nation sound. With mawkish benevolence they profess to look with pity on our narrow prejudices; and would break off the fetters which we have blindly riveted upon our necks. We are invited to break down the sanctity of the Lord's day, and trample in the dust those very influences which

leaven and purify society; and are at once the nurseries of goodness and the safeguards of greatness. The Bible can do us no good, unless there be time to ponder its great truths, and drink in the spirit of the Divine religion which it breathes. In this busy and competing world, whose racing intensity is mightily enhanced by the temper of our age, where is there sufficient pause for bending in undisturbed quietness over the hallowed pages of the word of life, and uniting in that social worship which is due to the Lord of our spirits and our bodies, if the Holy Day, which should be dedicated both to rest and to devotion, should be blotted out and cast away? Will the fragments of time at the close of the other days, after the frame is weary with labour, and the heart consumed with care, be turned to religious account, when that spirit is not fed and trained, which can alone resist temptation, and grapple successfully with difficulties, that it may receive the pure milk of the word and grow thereby? The Sabbath is not only wisely and graciously adapted to man's bodily infirmities, by providing rest to his tired frame; but also to his religious wants, by furnishing a weekly returning season for Christian instruction, meditation, and worship, that the spiritual affections may be quickened, and the heart revived; that by communion with the Father of spirits, and by fresh supplies of grace from on high, he may go

forth to his family and his work with a vivid realization of the things that belong to his peace; fortified against temptation; armed for renewing his conflict with the world, the devil, and the flesh; and his heart shining with a heavenly radiance, like the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. In the sanctuary of God he consults his Bible chart, and has his compasses adjusted, that he may set sail on another voyage on the ocean of life, with his Father at the helm. Like Elijah under the juniper tree, he rises and eats out of an angel's hand the food of Divine grace; and in the strength thereof pursues his toilsome journey in the wilderness. He has his lamp supplied with oil, and trimmed by Him who walks among the golden candlesticks, that he may carry it with him as a light unto his feet, and a lamp unto his path, in this benighted world; and find it a source of joy and encouragement, when all other lights go out. He gives the day to the Lord, whose name it bears, and the Lord fills it with His fulness, and returns it as a golden cup running over with the Divine blessing. He comes to the rock that day, and smites it with the rod of faith; and the living water gushes out to refresh his thirsty soul; and the stream follows him all the rest of the week, and he drinks of it from day to day. From the Sabbath flows a river, whose streams make glad the city of God. It is a sun that sheds light and heat

upon all the other days, and makes them holy to the Lord. It is the Eden of days, where grows the tree of life. It is the sacrament of time, stamped with the seal of the King of kings, at which assembled thousands pay old vows to the Lord, and dedicate themselves anew to his service. It is a day which sounds a note of triumph; it commemorates our Lord's resurrection; and is the pledge and type of our own. It calls upon us to sing the anthem of creation, because the Lord is risen; and to rise with Him in newness of heart and life. It will be a dark day for our country, when the hedge that encloses the Lord's day shall be broken down, and all they that pass by shall pluck the vine that grows within; when the boar out of the wood shall waste it, and the wild beast of the field shall devour it. With no religious and moral restraint upon the wild passions of untamed humanity, the purest affections of the heart will be rudely trodden down, the most sacred principles outraged, the sinews of moral strength and accountability cut or fatally relaxed, the breakwaters and barriers of sin destroyed, and a flood of violence let in to sweep over the land, and cover the highest mountains of rank, and wealth, and power. We should defend the Sabbath as the very walls of Jerusalem, in which if a breach be made, the enemy will come in like a flood, and our religion, our institutions, and our liberties will be involved in one *wide-spread* ruin.

"O day most calm, most bright,
The fruit of this, the next world's bud,
The indorsement of supreme delight,
Writ by a Friend, and with His blood;
The couch of time, care's balm and bay;
The week were dark, but for thy light:
Thy torch doth show the way."

The Sabbath occupies a peculiar position in the Decalogue. It stands between the two great divisions of the Law, and forms a golden link of connexion in the great chain of religious and moral obligation. Like a guardian angel, it stretches its protecting and fostering wings over both tables of the Law, and sheds upon them a benignant influence. The more spiritually it is kept, the more faithfully will the commandments be honoured, and the more deep and heartfelt will be our love to God and our love to man. The Sabbath both waters and warms the plants of religion and morality, and makes them grow and flourish in the hearts of men.

Not a few of the professed friends of humanity would substitute the influence of nature and art for the influence of the word of God. As if Christianity had been tried and found wanting; as if it were an effete and obsolete system, and unworthy of the countenance of this enlightened age; it is to be summarily rejected, thrown from its ancient pedestal, and buried out of sight. The filthy are to be washed by admiring the pearly drops of dew

sparkling in the rays of the morning sun, and perfumed with the fragrance of flowers. The coarse and sensual and degraded are to be refined and elevated by gazing at graceful and elegant works of art; and, being thereby weaned from all grovelling habits, are to cast their old slough, and in the hands of their new teachers are to astonish the world by their love and homage to God, and their polite graciousness and suavity to man. The lessons learned in the school of art, and the influence imbibed in the temple of nature, are to introduce a millennium so refined, and pure, and gentle, and noble, and happy, as to eclipse the finest pictures, and dispel the visionary charms of the millennium of the Gospel of Christ.

We would not utter a single word to disparage the merits, or undervalue the claims, of either nature or art. All God's works praise Him, and it ill becomes us to refuse to examine their laws, and admire their beauty and utility. He would not have dressed the universe in a coat of many colours, and lavished on great objects and small such exquisite skill, and adorned the flowers of the field, and the shells of the sea, with such lovely forms and hues, had He not designed our taste to be cultivated, that they might be inlets to joy, and incentives to devotion. Nor let us be unjust to the excellence of art, and the office it fulfils in the progress of civilization. Wherever God has bestowed

upon man a congenial faculty, let it be employed in the arena of art; and if exercised in a devout and loving spirit, the fine creation of the mind, and the wonderful work of the hand, may be laid as an offering on the altar of the munificent Author of the gift. Nor let the poor and dusty child of toil be denied the benefit and delight of looking at those rare productions. Let every influence that goes to refine humanity be open to all who will receive it; and let an enlightened and Christian spirit preside over all; but let not the temple be burned down, or levelled with the ground, that we may reach the palace of art; let not the creature be exalted and set on the throne of God.

The current sentiments and reasonings of the anti-religious advocates of nature and art indicate profound ignorance of the moral and religious constitution of man. They are totally oblivious of the tendency of responsibility to slumber, or be perverted, unless appealed to and cultivated by truths adapted to rouse the languid heart, and lead it to think of its accountability to God. Now, in the field of natural scenery, in the region of science and art, there is nothing that directly speaks to the conscience, and brings home a solemn conviction of the justice of God, and our amenability to Him as the moral Ruler of the universe. A pious man, whose heart is already right with God, will find in such spheres of observation ample materials for feeding the flame of devotion, and cherishing the

spirit of fellowship with God; but he, whose religious and moral nature is dormant, requires another teacher, and a more direct monitor, to quicken and develop the seared conscience. He will gaze upon bright skies, and green fields, and glassy lakes, and foaming cascades, and lofty mountains, and shaggy woods, on graceful statuary, and fine paintings, and elegant vases, and listen to the most exquisite music, and yet never thrill with an overawing sense of sin, or feel himself confronted with the Teacher of hearts, or experience powerful promptings to gird up his loins, and deny himself, in order to serve the Lord of all. The influence of such objects tends rather to relax and enfeeble, than to invigorate and exercise conscience. The faculties and feelings brought into play are more allied to taste and enjoyment, than to religious and moral affections and habits. We are exhilarated and soothed, but those sentiments and feelings are not addressed which go to form a conscientious character, and set the Lord before us as our Governor and Judge. Few retire from such scenes to meditate and pray, and to fix the eye of faith on scenes of unfading glory. If they go to those schools irreligious and immoral, they leave them in no better condition. No sin-stains are washed out; and the law of God is not written on the heart. As to religion and morality, they come as they go.

There is no evidence to show that art, when

systematically allied to devotion, ministers to the true spirit thereof. Architecture, painting, statuary, and music have all been enlisted in the service of Christianity, without making good their title to be true benefactors. The handmaid has become the mistress. Taste has been cultivated to the exclusion of piety. The soul of religion has been sacrificed to its form. In the midst of architectural magnificence and artistic beauty, with graceful objects to please the eye, and sublime ones to solemnize the heart, and the ear delighted with the pealing organ and the swelling choir, pure religion has pined and died. Christianity has found a grave in many a gorgeous cathedral; and art has sung and smiled over her tomb. As taste ceased to be subordinate and was honoured as principal; when the gratification of cultivated feeling took the place of Christian instruction, of devout and humble worship, God seemed to withdraw: as when a voice was heard from the inner courts of the temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem, saying, Let us go hence. When art becomes predominant, and attracts attention to itself in worship, and is cultivated for its own sake, the simplicity of devotion is destroyed; the voice of conscience is stifled, and incense is offered to man instead of homage to God. Thus religion grows sickly and sentimental; and those who engage in it degenerate into gay triflers, lovers of

pleasure more than lovers of God; or laying the flattering unction to their souls that their duty is discharged by listening to a graceful performance, they retire from the mimic scene, and plunge into the mire of sin. Thus moral rottenness may be concealed by a decorated exterior. History bears unequivocal testimony to the fact, that again and again has Christianity sunk into corruption and decay, when enshrined in the richest symbols which art could devise; and that all the magical influence of which art can boast has never revived it from its ashes. Art has often rung its knell, and chanted its funeral dirge, but never has it presided at its new birth. The still small voice of the word, and the breath of the Spirit, have ever conspired to produce a change like life from the dead; and that too when art stood aloof, and refused to lend its aid. It has lulled with its opiates many a conscience into a deep sleep, but never has it awakened one into life and energy.

History is equally clear and emphatic in its testimony regarding the powerlessness of art and taste to regenerate society, and restore health and vigour to a sick and prostrate nation. Art has neither power to reform the Church, nor to infuse life into the state. It fails to touch the springs of moral obligation. It studies grace, and forgets obedience. It refines without purifying; and waters none of those sturdy and self-denying prin-

ciples, which make the heart of a nation sound, and cause its pulse to beat true to the law of God. Unless pure religion form the soil out of which art grows, it is but a flower blooming over a grave, where corruption reposes in the arms of death. When one of the tombs of ancient Etruria was opened, there was seen within a kingly figure in all the calm repose of sleep, with jewelled fingers, and crowned head, as if resting amid a magical scene of royal magnificence. But upon the free admission of air, the form of tranquil dignity became tremulous; the calm features vanished; and the imposing form crumbled to dust. Such is the state of society from which the sense of responsibility is withdrawn by the neglect of the Divine Word, which nourishes this inner life. The hand of art then but decorates a corpse. Let the air in, let agitation arise, and its beauty fades, its glory departs; and nothing is left but a deposit of ashes in the tomb. As such a society has no moral basis to rest upon, and is not cemented by the bonds of faith, and love, and obedience, revolution with the first stamp of its foot shakes the whole fabric, and shivers it to atoms. It resembles the magnificent spectacles seen in the Arctic regions, where the ice assumes the appearance of the richest architecture, in the form of domes, and arches, and castles, glittering in the sun, but so precariously balanced and insecure, that the vibration of the air from

the sound of the human voice, or the stroke of an oar, will bring the whole down with a crash like thunder.

We have many advocates in our day of Continental manners, and Continental sabbaths, and Continental love of art, who would assimilate the state of society in Great Britain to what it is in France and Germany. They are so enamoured of what they see and enjoy there,—of the gay spirit of amusement that prevails,—of the absence of all religious restraint,—of the free abandonment of the heart to scenes of pleasure and works of art, that they flatter themselves they would confer a great benefit upon their country, and make this Island a far pleasanter place to live in, were the same spirit introduced and nurtured among ourselves. But we must look at both sides of the picture. If we are to thrust aside the Bible, and trample upon the laws of God, for the sake of patronizing pleasure and art, we are not to reckon upon the continuance among us of those virtues and habits, of that high moral tone and love of order, which are the fruit of the religion of Christ. After banishing our Benefactor, we may say, farewell, to the blessings it dispenses. If we cut down the tree, how can we expect to gather its fruit? If we kill the bird, is it not visionary to look for the golden eggs? If we are to have Continental tastes and sentiments and practices, we may prepare for Continental insecurity,

Continental despotism, and Continental revolutions. It is hopeless to think of separating the effect from the cause; of sowing the seed, and imagining that we shall not reap what we sow. Do we wish to see a tottering throne? a fugitive sovereign? a prostrate nobility? a shackled press? scenes of violence and blood? manacled liberties? a bleeding and groaning country? and all our honours as a nation, as the nurse of pure religion and social progress, and the asylum of the oppressed, laid in the dust? Then let the Continent be our model, and its tone and practices transplanted to our sea-girt soil. Our legislators would do well to set their houses in order, when the day dawns in which we shall see such a disastrous change effected. Their triumph will be their own ruin and the ruin of their country. Those elements and passions, whose name is Legion, will be unchained, and the restraints of culture and art will no more control them, than the green withes, or the cords of tow, held Samson, when he sprung to his feet in the irresistible energy of his gigantic strength. The volcano will pour forth its burning lava; and will no more be allayed by the voice of refined taste, than the molten stream of fire is stopped by the vines and flowers which it covers and burns up in its desolating course.

Love of art can put no curb upon cruelty. A man may admire a fine painting or statue, who

will neither fear God, nor regard man. During the horrors of the French Revolution there was a conflict one day at the Tuileries. "Some miserable wretches climbed up the marble monuments which adorned that splendid spot. The insurgents abstained from firing, lest they should injure the statuary, but pricked them with their bayonets till they came down, and then murdered them at their feet; an instance of taste for art, mingled with ferocious cruelty, perhaps unparalleled in the history of the world." They spared the work of man, but did not hesitate to mutilate and destroy the work of God. They would not be guilty of an outrage on taste; but they did not scruple to outrage justice and mercy. They refused to chip a marble statue; but they felt no compunction in dipping their hands in the blood of their fellow-creatures. They would have blushed to be thought iconoclasts; but they were not ashamed to be murderers. It will be a poor consolation to know, that the man who stabs us is refined in his tastes, and, after leaving us weltering in our blood, will go home to a house adorned with beautiful forms and resounding with exquisite music. To encourage the introduction of such elements among us, is to invite the locusts to eat up every green thing. We may as well store up powder and faggots in the vaults of the constitution, and apply a match to blow up all that is great and good in the land.

When Christianity falls, it will not fall alone; like the strong man, when made the sport of the mocking Philistines, it will bring down the pillars of the commonwealth, and be buried in the ruins of the kingdom, which knows not the day of its visitation.

The credulity of the irreligious purifiers of society is a curious phenomenon. While shutting their eyes to the clearest testimony of history, which shows that the word of God is the pioneer of religious and civil blessings, and that those nations that sit under the shadow of Christianity, and partake most largely of its spirit, and are most obedient to its voice, are the most prosperous, stable, and progressive; they manifest a superstitious confidence in ideas and influences which have no virtue to regenerate mankind. Their unbelief rejects what is Divine; it denounces and discards a religious system of tried and attested efficacy,—a remedial power which is working beneficially at their very door, and throws the shield of its protection over their own homes; and yet they embrace and extol measures which have no merits to recommend them, and which experience proves to be devoid of all moral power. They are sceptical, yet superstitious; they bow to the human, and scorn the Divine. They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. They do not resemble the net of the parable, which encloses fish of every kind; and when

brought to land, wise hands gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away; for they gather the bad into the vessels of their hearts, and cast the good away. They scout all the acknowledged laws of evidence; for they reject what is well attested, and receive and patronize what is totally devoid of proof. The magical wand of the Crystal Palace is to turn iron into gold, transform the base portion of mankind into the refined and contented, and change the lion into a lamb. The school of art is to supersede the school of Christianity; works of design, and specimens of exhumed antiquity, are to eclipse the heaven-illuminated truths and events of revelation; and the catalogue of a Museum is to be the poor man's Bible, which is to make him and all things new. How inconsistent and credulous is unbelief! It feasts upon a dream; and turns away from the manna sent down from heaven.

The religion of the Bible is the nurse and guardian of all the manly and social virtues, which concur to make a nation good, and great, and unconquerable. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation; and if this is wanting, all the glitter and power in the world do but hide weakness, and sow the seeds of corruption. There is a worm at the root of the gourd, and it must decay. The Word of God cultivates the sense of accountability to a righteous, supreme, ever-present King; and ren-

ders a man thoughtful, and inspires sentiments and habits of self-control and heroic endurance. It brings in the powers and glories of the world to come, to counteract and repel the allurements of the present world. It expands and enlarges the heart; makes love to man as a brother well up in the bosom; and prompts to acts of generous sympathy and substantial and timely aid. It makes home a little sanctuary, the sheltered scene of warm affections and mutual endearments,—a calm retreat from the storms of life, where cares and perils are forgotten amidst the smiles of domestic love and joy, and the ruffled spirits are soothed into gentleness and repose. It teaches us to fear God, and honour the king; invests our country with new charms, and binds it to our hearts by dear and hallowed ties; and makes us jealous of our homes and hearths, and the sepulchres of our fathers. By cherishing a spirit of prayer, and dependence upon the arm of the Almighty God, it calls down the blessing of Him who says, "Them that honour me, I will honour." The nation in whose heart it lives cannot fall,—cannot be enslaved; for it is linked to the throne of eternal truth and justice. It elevates the lowest; adorns whatever it touches; and is a wall of fire around us, and the glory in the midst of us. The Bible is the pilot-ship that guides the fleet in a dark night, and shows them by the Divine light it carries how to

steer in safety. It can do more for us, and has done more, than wooden walls, and all other works of defence. The virtues it rears are the true body-guard of royalty, and the palladium of our privileges and prosperity. Let the Word of God be trodden down, and our Magna Charta is gone, and the best laws are useless; for it is the spirit it inspires which gives to good laws their soul and action. Burns in his Cotter's Saturday Night, when painting with inimitable beauty and simplicity the patriarchal scene of heartfelt and artless devotion, says,

> "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
> That makes her loved at home, revered abroad."

A nation with those domestic wells of piety and love, to refresh and purify and ennoble the hearts of her children, need fear no foe; her place of defence is the munition of rocks; her bread shall be given her, and her water shall be sure. So long as the Gospel banner floats upon her walls, and its pure, affectionate, and self-denying spirit beats in her breast, Jehovah will fight for her, and bless her, and make her a blessing. He who blessed the house of Obed-edom for the sake of the ark, will not fail to favour the kingdom in whose heart loyalty to Christ is enshrined. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Except Christianity abide in the ship, we cannot be saved.

2. The tone of responsibility is affected by the character of the Lord whose dominion we acknowledge.

The contemplation of a stern and unbending ruler, whose righteousness is unsoftened by love and mercy, would tend to give a tone of severity to the character. Fear would be the predominant feeling excited. There would be no room for the exercise of grateful and tender feelings. We grow in resemblance to the person to whom we cherish a spirit of loyalty, and yield willing subjection. We receive the impression of his character, and are moulded after his image.

Now the character of our Lord Jesus Christ is calculated to give a tone of peculiar nobleness and affection to our sense of accountability. In yielding obedience to Him, it is not a rigid and inflexible law that makes us bow to its iron authority, but the holy and righteous dominion of a Person, in whom all grace and loveliness centre. Law and love go hand in hand in His government. The Ruler is our Friend, in whom the august sacredness of majesty is tempered and sweetened by all the winning and melting attractions of mercy. Our King who sits upon the throne, and will hereafter take His place on the judgment-seat, hung for us upon the cross. He is endeared to us by words and actions, and sufferings and gifts, which overflow with love. All our best feelings

are appealed to, and an influence is brought to bear upon us, admirably fitted to inspire both loyalty and affection; and to combine in our character integrity with tenderness and humility. The more entirely we are subjects of Christ, not only do we become more conscientious, but also more kind. The lovely image of Jesus is engraven on the heart. He draws us up into fellowship with Himself, and blends the gracious influence of a Friend with His supremacy as a Sovereign, in stimulating our spiritual progress. He has set us an example as a subject how to obey and to conquer, which far transcends all the finest pictures that poets have ever drawn. The youth depicted as passing victoriously through successive allurements in his upward course, at last perishes among the snow on the cold Alpine heights,

> "In hand he bears, 'mid snow and ice,
> The banner with the strange device,
> Excelsior!"

A purer and more sublime inspiration flows from the matchless character and career of Jesus, struggling on in self-denying love through darkness and sorrow, till He expires with the words of holy triumph on His lips. The impulse heaven-ward becomes more vigorous and spirit-stirring as we catch the joyful words, "The Lord is risen;" and after getting a glimpse of His benignant face, and hearing the familiar tones of His affectionate voice, we

behold Him ascending to heaven in the very act of blessing His disciples with uplifted hands. Enthroned amid the splendours and hallelujahs of heaven, He directs our eyes to a crown of righteousness; and kindles the desire to rise with Him in spirit, and sit down with Him in heavenly places. How poor are the aspirations excited by the poetical influence of Parnassus, and the self-complacent gratulations of hero-worship, compared with the elevating power of the God-man, who humbles while He exalts, subdues the austerity of the soul, and enriches and irradiates the character with the soft and lovely graces of the Spirit!

3. Responsibility has respect to the personal and individual relation in which man stands to the Lord of all.

Christianity appeals to the individual consciousness, and checks the tendency to lose ourselves in the crowd. However great the number of persons brought within its renewing and saving influence, the work is done by separate conversion in each. A large mass of soldiers may be surrounded, and compelled to surrender themselves as prisoners in a body, without being severally seized and led captive; but Christ apprehends individuals, and conquers a multitude by subduing each person of which it is composed. There was a distinct and independent work in the heart of every one of the

three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost. It was no promiscuous victory. The hand of Divine grace took hold of each, and the Holy Spirit had personal dealings with each, as truly as if there had been but one convert to grace His triumph.

Thus Christ arouses the conscience from its slumbers, and teaches every believer to feel the sacredness and solemnity of personal obligation, as really as if his Lord and he alone existed in the universe. Each has his mental struggles, his soul-conflict, his separate and independent trains of thought, his hopes and his fears, his defeat and his victory, his fall and his rise. He feels that he is a sinner, under sentence of death, amenable to a righteous God; and he flies for his life to the only refuge. Were a nation born to God in a day, the process would be the same. It would consist of a series of individual, though contemporaneous, conquests. The Lord would go forth conquering and to conquer; and the people would fall under Him pierced by the arrows shot from His bow with His own hand, and be personally healed by the hand that inflicted the wound.

Unless this sense of personal accountability to God is cultivated, there is no safeguard for the stability of a professing subject of Christ, when he is placed in new circumstances. Propped up by external influence, conforming to the opinions and

observances in which he was brought up, and borne along by the prevailing stream; seeking to please some and afraid to offend others, without any deep convictions of the truth, or solemn sense of duty, he is carried off his feet when compassed about by persons imbued with a different spirit from that of those among whom he has lived. Having taken his religion upon trust, and never communed solemnly with his own heart upon the claims of the Lord, he is unable to resist temptation; and no sooner does he leave home with its protecting influences, and mingle in new scenes and society, than, after a little hesitation and a few struggles, he abandons his creed, throws off his former restraints, and surrenders himself to what he hears and sees. He puts off his Christianity like an old coat, threadbare and out of fashion, which will not suit the place in which he now resides, and the companions with whom he associates, and whose tastes and sentiments and habits he is not slow to imitate. Many thus drift away from their moorings, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Whereas persons whose religion is the offspring of personal conviction, who feel their responsibility, and have the fear of God before their eyes, carry their Christianity with them into every place they visit; are unchanged amid all changes; and are stedfast and unmovable in the midst of those who live without God and without hope in the world.

They never forget that the Lord sees them in every country and under every sky; and though they may pass from one kingdom to another, and witness different customs and laws, they can never escape from the jurisdiction of Him whom they are everywhere bound to obey. Like trees deeply rooted in the soil, no storm can throw them down. They bend, but are not broken by the blast.

In like manner, when this sense of accountability is in healthy vigour, men will not do, in a collective or corporate capacity, what they would be ashamed to do in their private and personal transactions. It is amazing to observe what things many will take part in, when there is a large number to keep them in countenance, and throw over them the imaginary shield of their protection. They seem to think that the injustice or sinfulness of a measure, by being borne by many persons, is divided into such infinitesimal portions, as to leave such a small share to each individual that the conscience has no reason to be uneasy under it. An enlightened and sensitive conviction of personal accountability to the Lord would dissipate this dangerous delusion, and generate a pure and lofty tone of truth and equity, both in sacred and civil affairs. It would carry the spirit of the Gospel into all business; it would scatter many a prevailing subterfuge and excuse; and make men scorn the very idea of doing in a body what they would think

sinful to do alone. When Martha said to her sister, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," Mary arose, left the group of mourners, and went out to meet her Lord; and when the ear of the heart is open to His voice, we shall gird up our loins and follow Him, whatever others may say or do.

4. It is our duty, not only to cultivate a wakeful sense of responsibility ourselves, but to do what in us lies to have our institutions and society so ordered, as to encourage and reward those who are conscientious and faithful.

A dangerous element is in operation when a tone of society prevails, and a spirit regulates the affairs either of Church or State, which tends to counteract the influence of the Gospel, and avert the eye from the Lord of the conscience. When a blind and unscrupulous partisanship, disguising its ambitious objects by the cloak of Christianity, thinks more of the triumphs of party than the glory of God and the welfare of man, an influence is exerted which warps the judgment, inflames the passions, envelops the heart in a cloud, and causes the will of God to be forgotten. Though the shibboleth of a party may embody a great truth, the truth is lost sight of in keen struggles for victory and aggrandizement. Again, if society is indiscriminate in its favours and honours; if mammon is its god, and it opens its arms to possessors of wealth, though so totally devoid of those elements of character

which give a personal title to distinction, that, but for their wealth, they would not be honoured with one smile of gracious recognition; if freedom of opinion is curbed and manacled, and conscientiousness is frowned upon, and expected to strike its flag, and be conformed to the current of feeling which fashion or interest may dictate; if individuals breathing the spirit and reflecting the image of Christ are looked down upon, though the excellent of the earth, because they have not the recommendation of birth and wealth;—then temptations are thrown in the way of old and young, which will prove too strong for many, and lead them to swerve from the resolution to please God. And if men are promoted and rewarded, not according to the claims of personal merit, to their capacity and faithfulness to discharge the functions required, but from respect to their connexions and friends, this is tantamount to a bribe to corrupt conscience, and allures the aspirants to success to look to man, instead of requiring the requisite qualifications, and cultivating a spirit of fidelity to God. When a person depends upon the influence of others and finds it successful; when he is carried in the arms of their patronage, and is lifted up as by a machine in a warehouse from floor to floor without any personal effort, like a bale of goods, a premium is given to indolence and carelessness and incapacity, and the deserving are treated with in-

justice, and thereby soured and discouraged. An injury is thus done to the whole community, and a perilous snare laid in the way of the young to entangle them in sin, and tempt them to aim at a low and worldly standard of character. It is vain to embody pure and lofty principles in speeches and writings, if laws and institutions and practical arrangements go to nullify and suppress them. It is sowing the seed with one hand, and picking it up again with the other. It is laying wood upon the altar, and then throwing water upon it to prevent it from kindling. Everything that substitutes routine for conscientiousness; which tends either to make men mere machines or selfish mercenaries, without religion and without patriotism, should be swept away. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit; under whose shadow a power, hostile to spiritual Christianity and single-eyed loyalty to God, reposes, and diffuses a deadly influence all around, should have the axe laid to its root, and be hewn down. Every official element should unite with the leavening influence of the Gospel to remind us of our true position, and to imprint upon our hearts the conviction, that, whatever be the situation we fill, and whoever may be our earthly head, we are individually accountable to God, as His stewards, for the spirit we cherish and the work we do. Till this is done, there is no effectual check to corruption and mismanagement in sacred

or civil affairs; and the heart of society cannot be sound. The attitude of the heart should not prompt the question, what would my patron have me to do? or, what does my party recommend? but, what saith the Lord? what would the Lord have me to do? In every sphere, like the prophet in the mouth of the cave at Horeb, we should reverently cover our faces, and listen to the still small voice of God; "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "Let all functionaries, from the king to the constable, be fully alive to the sense of their individual responsibility—not to their fellows merely, but to the Supreme; and then a half of the expensive and ineffectual mechanism of our political institutions is superseded."

5. Our responsibility extends to heart and life, to belief and actions.

Some persons have held that a man is not accountable for his belief or his opinions, over which a great orator alleges that he has no more control, than he has over the hue of his skin, or the height of his stature. This oracular statement has been announced as expressing a great truth, that has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth. What this pompous declaration embodies is not a great truth, but a great and grievous error. It is spoken of as now a fixed and unalterable decision, which has overcome all opposition, and taken its place among the undisputed axioms of human belief,

and which carries conviction to every bosom. It has gone forth to all the ends of the earth, as if destined to universal dominion, as a pregnant truth that is to set the soul of man free from a debasing bondage, and usher in a new era. Never was there a greater delusion. The opinion that man is not responsible for his belief has not gone forth through all the earth; it is confined to a few superficial thinkers and talkers, who chafe at the curb of religious and moral restraint, and flatter themselves that they are the whole world. This spirit of theirs may strut, and assume lofty looks, and speak great swelling words of vanity; but its universal triumph is not so near as it anticipates; and "let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Were such a sentiment to be universally adopted, it would loosen the bonds of society, dissolve it into its elements, and introduce a chaos. The patrons and propagators of such a creed would conquer the world to destroy it. Their reign would be a reign of terror. The liberty they promise would prove licentiousness; and the life, with which in brilliant colours they paint the future, would be found a bitter death. Like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, they would celebrate their victory over a blazing world; and like the Pope and his minions chanting a *Te Deum* at the news of the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew, their song of jubilee would be sung

over the grave of all that is worth living for,—over the ashes of truth, and love, and liberty, and peace.

Those who sport this dangerous doctrine in matters of religion, would be slow to admit it in the field of science, of morality, of social and common life. They would blame a man who would shut his eyes to the force of astronomical evidence, and hold that the sun is no larger than a cart-wheel; that the stars are lamps lighted at night, and put out in the morning; and that the earth does not turn upon its axis, because the people would be required to walk with their heads down, and their feet up, like flies on a ceiling, and would inevitably drop off into the abyss on the other side of the globe. They would denounce a person who would maintain that there is no harm in a servant stealing from his master, if he can spare all he takes; or that there is nothing wrong in a malicious individual shooting from behind a hedge a man against whom he has a grudge, or burning his house over his head at night. If a man should say, I cannot help thinking thus, and I have as good a right to hold this opinion as you have to hold the opposite, the defence would be rejected with scorn and indignation. If such an excuse is not to be tolerated in other matters, why should it have weight in the sacred concerns of religion? If it is not valid between man and man, how can it be ad-

mitted between man and God? Is there to be a higher standard in earthly than in heavenly things?

A wrong creed is often the fruit of a bad heart. The heart in which unbelief is cherished, is styled in Scripture an *evil* heart. Pride, prejudice, inattention, and evil deeds, are the great bars to conviction, and to the admission of truth. Many will not examine evidence with humility, patience, and candour. They prejudge a question before sifting it. They are warped and biassed by their passions and misconceptions; they wish one side to be right, and therefore they believe it to be right; they fear that a certain line of thought will show that they are wrong, and they refuse to pursue it. They will not look truth openly in the face; and like Pilate, no sooner do they ask, What is truth? than they turn their backs and do not wait for an answer. Surely it cannot reasonably be denied that men are accountable for intrenching themselves in error, which by impartial inquiry and careful reflection they would see reason to abandon. "This is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

There is no limit to responsibility in the case of a rational creature. He cannot shut the door against its entrance anywhere. No lock or bar can keep it out. No power can forbid its entrance. God is everywhere, and accountability is every-

where. He has to do with everything. We are responsible to Him for our thoughts, our motives, our affections, our words, and our actions. Responsibility is part of our humanity; it goes with us where we go, and dwells with us where we dwell. It follows us into the church and into the workshop, into the family and into the warehouse, into our business and amusements, into solitude and society, into the company we keep and the books we read, into every moment of time, and every region of space. There is no neutral territory to which the authority of the Lord does not extend. He is the Head of the church, the Head of the family, the Head of the heart; and there is no sphere of thought, influence, or activity where He should not reign as King, and receive our homage.

5. Our responsibility is not affected by the doctrine of predestination or of necessity.

We are not overborne by the secret counsels of God. No force is used to crush and drag us along. We are treated as rational creatures; our motives are appealed to, and we are only answerable for what we give our consent to. We are willing agents, and are not bound in the chain of irresistible necessity, which would compel us to act and to move whether we will or no. We think, and speak, and act, and walk about, just as we would do were there no predestination or necessity in the government of God.

By a strange inconsistency, men conjure up the idea of fatalism to screen them from moral obligation, while they appear never to think of it, or permit it to weigh with them, in regard to their ordinary affairs. It ties up their hands in religion; but it never flits across their minds, or paralyses their energies, in other spheres of activity. The belief that it is fixed whether they are to live or die to-morrow, does not prevent them from taking their food, or avoiding a blow, or any danger which threatens their safety. The belief that it is settled in heaven whether the harvest is to be good or bad, does not hinder them from cultivating their fields with all possible care, and committing the seed to the soil. This doctrine does not make them careless about securing success to their speculations in business, or about the welfare of themselves and their children. Why, then, should it rise up as a rampart of brass before them in the field of religion? It should not administer an opiate to any heart. It lies beyond the proper sphere of our thoughts in this matter; and is foreign to the territory of the influences and considerations which pertain to our accountability. If it does not make the world stand still, and fix us immovably to our seats, neither should it freeze our souls and arrest our feet, when the command "Occupy till I come" sounds in our ears.

6. Our responsibility is not destroyed by any

peculiarity of original constitution, or of outward circumstances and influences.

Some persons, doubtless, have such a bodily or mental temperament, and are beset from childhood with such unfavourable influences, that they have more powerful temptations to contend with than others. But while those peculiarities render their position critical, and the formation of an exemplary character difficult, they do not destroy the accountability of such individuals. In dealings between man and man no such plea would be listened to, as exempting an evil-doer from blame. It would not be acknowledged for a moment as rendering a man guiltless who is chargeable with theft, cruelty, or falsehood. Man is not the creature of circumstances, the sport of inward and outward evil. He does not float helplessly down the stream like a feather floating on the surface of the water. It is his duty to resist the evil that assails him both in his own heart and in the world; to control his sinful tendencies, and combat temptations; to make circumstances bend to him, and not yield to the force of circumstances. He does not take a particular shape like a crystal under the influence of a a physical law, or like molten lead poured into a mould. Every good man has his religious and moral battle to fight, and he is the better of fighting his way through the crowd of temptations, if he does it courageously and in faith. Victory is not gained

without a struggle. The serpent is not bruised under our feet without a wound in the heel. The moral heights are bristling with foes; and nothing short of a brave heart, and a strong arm, can scale those heights, and make them our own; that the banner of the covenant may float there in triumph over our heads. The feeling of self-reproach experienced when we fail in our object by misconduct, and the voice of an approving conscience that rewards our faithful efforts, distinctly proclaim that neither our external nor internal condition renders us such helpless captives, as to absolve us from the solemnities of accountability. If we surrender ourselves to the sway of passion, or of circumstances, bending like slaves to the lash of the taskmaster, the blame is our own; and we must answer for it to the Judge of all the earth.

7. Our responsibility is in proportion to our gifts, and privileges.

While the Lord says to all, "Occupy till I come," some have far more to answer for than others. Their capacity, opportunities, and means, mark them out as signally favoured beyond their fellows. Their improvement and usefulness should far exceed those of the less amply gifted. To be abreast only of the less bountifully provided, is to be far behind their proper position. What is much for one, is little for others. The widow's mite was a princely gift for the poor woman, who gave her

all; but it would be a niggardly contribution for those who give out of their abundance. A man's gifts form the gauge of his responsibility. They are the measure of what is required of him; and point to the standard of obligation under which he should act. A man with ten talents should far outstrip the man who has but one. He who is born and brought up in a Christian land, with a church at his door, and a Bible in his house, will pass through a different ordeal from that of those whose lot has been cast among the darkness of heathenism, and have had no better guide than the dim, glimmering light of nature. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

The doctrine of responsibility, then, should be dear to every lover of God and man; for without it this world would be dark and disordered; and there would not be a safe spot on which to set our foot. To throw this truth away is not to enjoy liberty, but to plunge into licentiousness; it is not to furnish a lamp to our feet, but to extinguish a light which God kindles in the heart, to show us our way through the tempting mazes of the world. We wander into pathless error, we sink into the horrible pit and the miry clay, unless we are kept right by the bond of responsibility, that unites us to the throne of a righteous Lord. There is no stability, no progress, no hope, no peace for us, without submission to His just sway. All is loose

without this sacred tie. This truth that binds man to God, also binds man to man, and makes him a faithful friend, and a kind brother. This is the cement of society, the great bond of brotherhood. Loyal subjection to a common Lord makes us one. This sublime doctrine is the safeguard of families, and the pole-star of nations. When lodged in the heart, it awes man, and yet elevates him. It inspires him with great purposes, and prompts him to heroic and self-sacrificing deeds. It lifts him above the fleeting vanities of the world, makes expediency give place to principle, selfishness to generosity, reserves for the Lord the throne of conscience, and points to the race which faith runs for the prize of an incorruptible crown. Let responsibility be laid up in our hearts, and inscribed on our banners; under its influence let us live, that in the belief of it we may die, never forgetting that we are not our own; that as we advance along life's brief journey, in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in the hopeful spring, in the blooming summer of life, and in the wintry snows and leafless scenes of old age, we may ever remember the solemn appeal, "Prepare to meet thy God;" for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

CHAPTER V.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.

MATT. XXV. 29.

"Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath."

THIS rule of the Divine procedure has two s or poles; the one coming in contact with the fa ful servants, the other with the unfaithful. law of the Lord is exceeding broad; there is an individual whom it does not reach; not a which it does not provide for. Every variet character has its place marked out; not a shad difference is unrecognised. There are rewa but the rewards are not wholesale, and indisc inating; but finely adapted to the spiritual co tion and fidelity of the persons whom the L crowns with honour. There are punishments; the punishments are not assigned in forgetfuln of any peculiarity in the case of those who justly doomed to pay the penalty of unfaithfuln

Though the variety of character be countless, not a trait shall be missed; not an element shall be overlooked. Not a criminal shall be put into the wrong cell; not a crown shall be put upon the wrong head.

The doctrine of rewards and punishments is the correlative of responsibility. Accountability would be but a name, a high-sounding fiction, to scare children, and keep people in subjection by working on their fears, were it not followed by penal results. This truth requires the future for its domain, that it may have a sufficient field for the development of its spirit,—for the production and ripening of its fruit. It appeals to our hopes and our fears, and points to the time to come, as the region where the full reward awaits the faithful, and the full penalty shall smite the unfaithful servant. Responsibility holds in its hand a cup, of which all must drink. To the believing and obedient it is the cup of salvation; to the impenitent, it is a cup full of the red wine of God's wrath; and all the wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs thereof, and drink them.

I. Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

This promise admits of being viewed in two aspects. First, it may be contemplated in relation to this life; and secondly, in relation to the life to

come. Though it is the latter that is held up to view in this part of the parable, the former is not to be excluded from our consideration, as the rule involved in this promise is in operation every hour of our existence.

1. Let us glance at this promise in connexion with the present life.

The reward here promised is an increase of gifts, to such as are faithful in the use of the privileges they possess. Their gifts are not wasted, but strengthened by exercise. Their souls grow richer by the diligent circulation of the mental and spiritual coin intrusted to them. No act of obedience is ever lost; for God annexes to it a sure and a present reward. The man who does it is a richer and better man. A rewarding blessing is poured into his bosom. The Lord does not wait till the race of his servant shall be run, and his life closed; but from day to day He honours and rewards him. As the stream of a faithful life flows on, it increases in strength, and swells in volume, becoming richer in blessings as it proceeds in its course. The talents are doubled; and abundance flows into the heart at every step. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Let him act up to the light he has, and he shall receive more. Let him follow the dictates of the grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and the Comforter will not

withhold fresh and more abundant supplies. A clearer light dawns upon the mind, when the intellect is clarified by conscientiousness. The understanding derives benefit from the purity of the affections, and the sincerity of the heart; and the affections, in their turn, are gainers by the enlargement of knowledge rightly applied. Our gracious Lord thus links on one blessing to another in a beautiful chain of connexion for our encouragement. A gift turned to a faithful account does not stand alone; it is a stepping-stone to another and a higher; so that the series rises in a scale of growing munificence. The last or feeblest gift, like a child, becomes a parent in its turn; and is followed by a numerous and fruitful offspring of blessings. Those who begin with little shall not end with little, if they act with diligence and conscientiousness; and those who possess much shall find themselves, both mentally and spiritually, gradually acquiring more. The more they give out, the more comes in. The well of water springs up in them more abundantly unto everlasting life. They enjoy what they once never hoped to reap; and are able to perform what once they would have thought it presumption even to attempt. The little one becomes a thousand; and the day of small things brightens into the day of great things. Jacob with nothing but his staff goes over Jordan, and returns with two bands of wealth and bless-

ing. Under this gracious rule nothing goes to waste; for the whole of the last harvest is the next year's seed; and thus the abundance of the soul increases a hundred-fold.

Though the special season of reward is deferred, in the Parable, till the return of the Lord, there is an actual reward before the time of solemn reckoning. In Matthew, he that had received five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. Likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. In Luke it is written, "Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." This success involves the principle of reward. The increase of the talents, and pounds, marks not only the diligence and sagacity of the possessors thereof; but also expresses the gracious approval of their Lord, before a word of praise has dropped from His lips. They are blessed with prosperity of soul. Their spiritual capital increases; and their stock grows on their hands. They grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The gifts of some are doubled; while some are increased ten-fold, and others five-fold. But in every case there is a present reward. The spirit of heaven expands in them. The graces of the Spirit grow, and ripen in their hearts. Every exercise of a Christian affection makes the mellow juice of

God's promises flow into the soul. The ripe fruit falls into their lap as they walk along the path of obedience. What they sow they reap even in this life. The approving voice of conscience regales them with its sweet music at every step. They have meat to eat which others know not of. They have a joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle. The statutes of the Lord are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage. He furnishes a table for them in the wilderness, and feeds them with angels' food; shedding light upon their hearts; filling them with peace and joy in believing; and making every Christian feeling, and act, and habit, augment their spiritual weath, and multiply their resources.

2. Let us view this promise in connexion with the life to come.

In Matthew, the lord says to each of the faithful servants, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." In Luke the reward is more precise, and determinate. The servant in whose hands his lord's pound gained ten pounds, receives authority over ten cities; and he who gained five pounds is appointed over five cities. This style of reward is in keeping with the promise made by our Lord to His apostles. "Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in

the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The investment of authority is the reward unequivocally involved in these cases. Some of the parties are appointed rulers over many things; and others are raised to the dignity of governors over cities. They are not only made happy as the presence and fellowship of the Lord alone can make them; but they are exalted to the exercise of rule and authority. Their trust is enlarged; they are invested with dominion in the heavenly country; and the particular gifts that distinguished them here find full scope and exercise in the new region to which they are translated. They reign with Christ; they sit down with Him upon His throne; and in subjection to His sovereign will, they carry on His government in the sphere to which they are appointed. They are rulers in a land where all are kings and priests unto God.

It is objected to this view by some, that this variety of rewards, and authority in heaven, is incompatible with salvation by grace. They seem to think, that because we are justified by faith without the works of the law, the grace of God will exalt all the redeemed to the same pitch of glory. But the Scriptures give no countenance to such an opinion. While they teach us that salvation is entirely of grace, they also teach us that God is

not unrighteous to forget our works of faith, and labours of love; and that not even a cup of cold water, given to a disciple for the sake of Christ, shall lose its reward. The rewards of grace, though not grounded on personal merit, are so discriminating, as to be adapted to the endless variety of character among the children of God. The thief on the cross will be found in heaven as well as the apostle Paul; but there is no reason for believing that he will occupy so conspicuous and honoured a place as that devoted ambassador for Christ to the Gentiles; whose love burned with an ardour that no water of difficulty or danger could quench; and whose laborious and self-denying life was a daily thanksgiving to the Lord that bought him. As there are angels and archangels in heaven, spirits differing in capacity, though all blessed according to the measure of their several capacities, so the saints there shall rise in beautiful gradation from the lowest to the highest, each heart filled to the brim with happiness; and every head crowned with glory; but still distinguished by diversity of gifts. Those who towered above their fellows in gifts and graces here, shall not lack their pre-eminence in heaven. No dull uniformity shall mar the beauty of the celestial inhabitants. Every one shall be in his right place. There shall be room for all; and not a faculty shall be dormant; for in that ample field there shall be abundant exer-

cise for every distinctive capacity. Diversity in unity, and unity in diversity, shall appear in the highest perfection in the model society of the blessed; where the all-pervading oneness shall bring out in richer relief the manifold variety; and unfold the harmony of God's creatures, in the cordial co-operation of all in the spheres of action in which they are called to move.

It is a dangerous practice to maintain such a rigid adherence to a system of theology, as to keep out of our creed what God has inserted in the Bible. This betrays greater jealousy for the harmony and compactness of our views of Divine truth, than for the integrity and honour of the Word of God. Animated by this spirit, not a few persons have cut away and thrown overboard one half of the Gospel, that the other half might appear simple and consistent; forgetting that, even in the hands of Paul, Christianity was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; and that even Peter, as he bent reverently over the pages of the Apostle of the Gentiles, acknowledged that he found in them things hard to be understood. We are bound to receive and teach the whole counsel of God, whether we can succeed in reconciling one part with another or not. A doctrine may be a healing, medicinal doctrine, and have a purifying and stimulating influence upon the heart and life, though to our finite minds it may present a puz-

zling and mysterious aspect, and we may be unable to adjust and harmonize it with other truths, and piece it satisfactorily into our system. We must not hide what God has revealed; we must not be silent on what He has published abroad.

Accordingly, it is a sign of weakness and timidity, not to say of treachery, to be shy about the doctrine of proportional rewards, or to discard it altogether, because it may seem to come into collision with salvation by grace. No man should presume to be more evangelical than Christ and His apostles. The wisdom of man is foolishness with God. We should beware of putting His words to the torture, explaining away their natural meaning, and extorting from them a non-natural sense, to make them square with our pre-conceived ideas of what they should teach. This is not the way to become as little children, and sit humbly at the feet of Jesus, and drink in without reserve the wisdom that drops from His lips. While God humbles and lays us in the dust, teaching us to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake;" He also appeals to feelings that lie deep in the human heart, when He assures us that nothing done for Him shall lose its reward. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which

soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2. Cor. ix. 6. A liberal seed-time of truth, and love, and obedience, shall be followed by an abundant harvest of reward; though merit shall be dumb, and grace be the spring and donor of all. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Luke vi. 38. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Matt. xix. 29. Nothing shall be lost. Even a holy purpose which it has been impossible to carry into effect, like that of David, when it was good that it was in his heart to build the house of the Lord, shall meet with its fruit in heaven.

Another part of the reward is embodied in these words, "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This is the joy which Christ himself feels,—pure, expansive, ennobling, and eternal. "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The Lord has His heart filled with a profound and holy joy, when He surveys the fruits of Divine love in the redemption of mankind, and sees of the travail of His soul in the happiness and

glory of myriads, and is satisfied. The redeemed enter into His joy when they share it, and rejoice with Him—when they live in His society, breathe the same atmosphere, are animated by the same spirit, and contemplate objects in the same light, and with the same feelings that He does. They shall rejoice in the absolute harmony of His will with that of His father; in the power, and honour, and exaltation to which He has been raised, as the reward of His humiliation; in His sublime triumphs over His enemies; in His delight in the happiness of others; and in the reverence, love, and gratitude that wait upon Him wherever He goes. They rejoice with Him in His love of God, in His love of truth and goodness, in His love of order and obedience, and in His love of all the glorious manifestations of the Divine perfections. They are one with Him; and nothing that pertains to Him is foreign to them. His honour is their honour; and His joy is their joy; for in all things their hearts beat in unison with His own.

In the presence of the Lord is fulness of joy. "It is but little we can receive here," says Leighton, "some drops of joy that enter into *us;* but there *we* shall enter joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness." All is joy within Christ, and all is joy around Him; and His servants, not being treated as servants, but friends, shall partake of the fulness of

His joy to the extent of their capacity. There shall not be one empty heart among them all. Every vessel shall run over with delight. All shall bask in the light and warmth of the Sun of righteousness; where there shall be no intervening object to intercept His genial rays; and no eclipse to cast a dark shadow upon the soul. Joy shall pass through every pore with thrilling ecstasy; and the spontaneous exercise of every faculty and affection in accordance with His will shall supply a perpetual stream of blessedness. There shall be rest in activity; and refreshment in obedience. And it will not be a sudden gush of joy, abundant but soon over; but constant, as well as overflowing. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord; and they shall never pass out of it. His people shall enjoy a perpetual summer; and find Him the source and centre of a life that shall never die.

We see, from the words of our Lord, that the rewards of grace far transcend anything within the reach even of perfect obedience. Even had man never fallen from his original innocence, but stood true to the trust committed to him by his Creator, he could never, by the merit of his works, have climbed to the august height to which Christ exalts His people; nor have won his way to the honours with which the Lord of glory crowns them. Vast is the distance between Eden below and Paradise above; between the first Adam dress-

ing and keeping the garden in primitive simplicity, possessed of a pure heart, but of limited knowledge, and easily drawn into the tempter's snare; and the second Adam, exalted at God's right hand, and crowned with honour and glory; having provided for His people an inheritance they can never lose; and raised them to a pitch of excellence from which they shall never fall. Human nature in Christ towers far above all the principalities and powers of the heavenly hosts. The redeemed stand nearer the throne than the angels; and when their glorified spirits shall dwell in glorious and immortal bodies, the prominent munificence of grace shall appear conspicuous to every eye; and then it shall be seen how far Divine love transcends in its gifts and favours all that creature merit can ever dream of. It is grace that lifts us up; it is grace that exalts and crowns us; it is grace that makes a heaven to fill, and that fills it with the lost; turning sinners into princes, and slaves into children and heirs of God.

The reward of entering into the joy of the Lord is in keeping with other passages of Scripture on this subject. It is not the mere prospect of joy or happiness that is presented to the mind; but of joy in the presence and company of the beloved Redeemer. Those who are willing to spend and be spent for Christ, are animated, amid toil and privation, by the hope of seeing the King in His

beauty,—of gazing on the face of the Lord who bought them,—of hearing His gracious voice,—of feasting upon His smiles,—of receiving blessings from His hand,—of following Him whithersoever He goeth, and of enjoying eternity in His blessed fellowship. Heaven would have a want were He not there. The Lamb is the light thereof; and it will be the most glorious light they ever saw. Not only shall their social feelings be delightfully exercised by the fellowship of the saints; but communion with their crowned Head, as their Elder Brother, shall keep every affection in tune, and make it an inlet of bliss. "God is love;" and there they shall dwell in love, and ever breathe it as the air of their eternal home. "I have a desire," said Paul, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." They shall be with Him, visibly and consciously with Him, nearer than ever before; with Him, for ever with Him; happy because He is happy. Paul had been in the third heavens, whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell; but he longed to be up again, not in vision, but in reality; not to look in and catch a glimpse of the unutterable things he saw there, but to dwell among them for evermore. Death had no terrors in his eyes, with such a prospect before him. The message of death would have been glad tidings to him; and he would have met the king of terrors with a smile. He

longed to be dissolved, that his spirit might be set free, and fly to the bosom of Jesus.

The joy of the Lord partakes of the security and perpetuity of the Lord. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The righteous inherit "life eternal." It is life in its highest sense, and contains all the elements of perfection. It is subject to none of the conditions or declensions of time. It has variety, but no fluctuation or decay. It is all joy; joy in meditation, joy in activity, joy in worship, joy in social intercourse, joy in every exercise of heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Every chord of the immortal spirit shall discourse sweet melody. And yet the delight shall never cloy. The heart shall never tire of it. It is suited to the affections; and shall enliven and enlarge them. No change shall be desired; for the fulness of the joy, and the perfection of the nature, shall supply perpetual variety. It is eternal joy; and projects its visions into the endless future; and fills the boundless prospect with light, and love, and holiness, and glory. That life is one unclouded day of bliss, where no heart sickens, and no grace droops; and where no fear of separation from the presence of the Lord ever casts its dark shadow over the soul; but where the full assurance of a happy immortality sheds a glorious radiance and peace upon all the redeemed. United to Him, and dwelling in Him who alone hath im-

mortality, the future is as secure as the present. No doubt of permanent possession shall ever disturb the peace of His people; and they shall never gaze on the scenes of celestial glory with a sorrowful eye, from the fear that the day may come when the crown shall fall from their heads, and they shall be banished from the abode of bliss.

II. From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

1. Let us view this rule of the Divine government in relation to the present life.

The righteous retribution of God is carrying this threatening into effect every day. Its operation is silent, but sure and constant. This law, in its action upon the unfaithful, leads to the withdrawal of the talents originally conveyed. There is a solemn work of retribution, in this respect, regularly and ceaselessly going on. The withdrawal is not done all at once. The work is gradual, but it is certain. The original stock is diminished by every instance of abuse of it. Unlike the widow's oil, it grows less and less, till it wholly disappears. The heart becomes harder by every resistance it offers to the truth. The candlestick is removed out of its place, not only in regard to churches, but also individuals, who receive the grace of God in vain, and do not walk in the light of the Lord. Opportunities of improvement and well-doing pass away never to return. Minds naturally vigorous

and promising, suffer an eclipse. They either become torpid and trifling, or fitful in their efforts, because they were allowed to rust in inactivity when early promptings pointed the way to exertion. Many thus sink into early moral decrepitude and decay. They are shattered wrecks, that fill the devout mind with melancholy. Judicial blindness seals their eyes. All the finer sensibilities of the soul wither and die. Truth meets with no welcome response in their hearts. They will not listen to the voice of the charmer, though he charm ever so wisely; and they are left to listen to the siren's song of deceit. The buds and blossoms of early promise are blasted, and drop in shrivelled abortiveness to the ground. Thus persons, who might be useful and honoured members of the Church, and of society, prove hurtful to themselves and others by becoming the victims of habits which grow upon them, and tighten their chains around their necks, with every new indulgence. They are stripped of what they once had, or rather they strip themselves. They might have been rich in the possession of the most precious benefits; but they are poor, and possess nothing of sterling value,—no treasure within as a source of enjoyment to themselves, or of usefulness to others. The light within them is darkness; and how great is that darkness! Their inward fruit is like Pharaoh's lean and blighted ears, rather consuming them than sup-

plying them with food. When the inner man is blasted, and the seat of happiness defiled, when the energies are torpid or grievously misapplied, and evil habits, like locusts, are eating up every green thing in the heart, it is not the superficial varnish of the world that will remove the plague-spots, and remedy the evil brought upon ourselves. Though we may admiringly gaze upon our character in the glass of self-flattery, and try to console ourselves with the delusive belief that we are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing, this will not prevent Christ from taking our likeness in less flattering colours, as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Luke puts this aspect of the subject in a still more striking light, when he says, "from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." Luke viii. 18. There are advantages and endowments, which a man only seems to have; for they are not his really and actually. He may flatter himself that he possesses them, but the possession is only apparent; he has but the shadow and the shell. What he seems to have is near him, but not in him. It is not incorporated with his soul. It is like loose leaves and flowers lying among the roots of a tree, which the wind scatters over the face of the earth. It does not enrich and purify his heart. He does not enjoy it, nor extract a blessing from it. He frustrates the

object for which it was bestowed. It is a fountain sealed, bread locked up, a sun veiled, a treasure hid; for it is the same to him as if it did not exist. But even this seeming possession shall disappear. The stream that murmured at his feet shall dry up; his deceptive greenness shall wither; and he shall be stripped, and left bare like the blasted fig-tree. The last drop of mercy shall melt away, and his soul shall become like a city sown with salt,—barren and desolate; where there is no smile of heaven to diffuse gladness; from which hope is banished; and where peace is laid in the grave. "Israel is joined to his idols, let him alone."

2. Let us contemplate this penalty in connexion with the world to come.

"Take, therefore, the talent from him." The process is more summary on the day of reckoning than at present. There will not be a gift or a privilege left. The day of repentance shall be past. The door of mercy shall be shut. No opportunity shall offer for recovering lost ground. The Lord shall recall His own, and take back the seed that lay neglected, and was never cast into the soil. In this life there is always some remnant of the Lord's gifts, and a renewal of acts of kindness, from the hand of that gracious Benefactor, who makes His sun to rise on the evil as well as the good; but there shall be no more of this when the day of accounts shall arrive. What is found in this chequered

scene of probation shall have no place in a state of of retribution. The voice of love shall invite no more. The hand of grace shall be opened no more. Mercy shall plead and entreat no more. Patience shall wait and forbear no more. The great bell of time shall have tolled its last hour, and the season of grace shall have passed never to return. The unfaithful servant shall be deprived of his last trust. His Master's goods shall be withdrawn, to his everlasting ignominy. He shall be hurled from his imaginary pre-eminence, and be no more trusted or honoured. He shall not only forfeit his talent, but suffer for his criminal neglect. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." While the faithful servants are rejoicing in their Master's return, feasting with Him and receiving new favours, his shall be the dark doom of the cast-away. Thrust down among the disobedient, he shall be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

There are some points of deep and solemn interest, brought out in the details of the Parable, pertaining to the slothful servant, which it now behoves us to consider.

1. The servant here condemned is he to whom was committed one talent.

Those who have but one talent are apt to excuse *themselves* for neglecting to exercise it, by alleging

that they can do so little, that their doing or not doing is of no consequence. But this is a plea that cannot be sustained. We, doubtless, owe much to men of commanding abilities, of pre-eminent gifts and graces, who are, in their day, burning and shining lights,—attracting the hearts of others to the love of truth and goodness, and introducing beneficent changes, which evolve, and ripen, and shed abundant blessings on mankind, long after their earthly career is closed. But the number of men of this type of character and mind is comparatively small. The great mass are not giants either in gifts or graces; but by assiduous cultivation of their talent, and hearty co-operation with others in works of usefulness, they contribute largely to the improvement and happiness of our race. Were the one-talent labourers to quit the field, they would be sorely missed by thousands; and the tide of improvement would soon begin to ebb. It is by them that the principal works of benevolence are carried on. They make up, in love and zeal, for what they want in ability; and thus their unpretending gift goes far and accomplishes much. Like bees, by their conjoint labours they accumulate honey which others enjoy. Like the coral insects, which build their castles from the bottom of the ocean, till they rear their heads as islands in the surface of the solitary main, and become the sunny abodes of man, and bird, and

beast; solid and magnificent superstructures rise up under their warm hearts and busy hands, cemented by love and stored with blessings; where many find a welcome shelter from the bitter blasts of sorrow and sin. There is not a gift, however small, with which God may not be honoured, and man benefited. The Lord does not seek to reap where He has not sowed; but He demands fidelity and diligence from those who have only one talent, not less than from those who have ten.

"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
I fondly ask: but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Even in trouble, when mind and body are laid prostrate, and the sufferer can take no effective part in the active scenes of life, the gift of confiding and unmurmuring patience will speak to the heart, and shed a sweet influence upon all who come within the attractive sphere of that contented and placid resignation. The bed-ridden may not be able to move but where they are lifted; they may not have strength to lift a cup to their own lips; and may breathe out their thanks in broken whispers, or signify their wishes by silent signs; yet may their prayers go up to heaven with

all the potency of the supplications of Moses, when with uplifted hands and entreating heart, he brought down victory to the arms of Israel, and discomfiture to Amalek.

"Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty,
Whose light blue eyes and hectic cheek are lit by the baleful fires of decline;
Hath not thy heart said of her, Alas! poor child of weakness?
Thou hast erred; Goliath of Gath stood not in half her strength;
For the serried ranks of evil are routed by the lightning of her eye;
Seraphim rally at her side, and the Captain of that host is God,
For that weak fluttering heart is strong in faith assured,—
Dependence is her might, and behold, she prayeth."

The sense of accountability to God, if assiduously cultivated in matters commonly accounted small, will be extended to things of greater magnitude and moment. It is a familiar maxim, that, if men take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves. And so it is, for example, in regard to time. Let a watchful and magnanimous fidelity preside over the disposal of the minuter portions, and the larger divisions will, without great effort, be applied to their proper object. It is in the loss of the fragments and intervals of time that the great waste lies, and the process of neglect begins. Those parts which should be carefully preserved and gathered up, like the parings and filings of gold, are surrendered to the impulse of the moment, and idly squandered away. Each

little encroachment is thought insignificant, though every successive slice is reducing the dimensions of what remains. Hence there are some persons who cannot command time to improve their minds, or do good to their fellow-men; while others as fully occupied, and during as long hours, find no such insurmountable difficulty; because with an inflexible purpose, and a persevering conscientiousness, they make every spare hour tell; and by daily putting a mite into the mental treasury, they at last fill it up to the brim.

2. The sin of the servant with the one talent was not that he abused his gift, but that he did not use it.

"He went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." He did not plunge into a course of licentiousness, and waste his portion in riotous living. He preserved the talent intrusted to him, and presented the goods which he received at his master's departure. He buried his gift, and lived as if he had it not. He might be a quiet, timid, inoffensive man, who did no injury to his neighbours; but he was branded with guilt, because he was an indolent and unprofitable servant. He lived in vain; consulting his own ease, and totally oblivious of the glory of God and the good of man. He shrunk from the sphere of active obedience, to which he was called. What he might have done for the honour of his lord, had he been will-

ing, he declined to do; and therein lay the ground of his condemnation. He had one talent for serving his master, and that talent he hid; and for this he was treated as a criminal; and in this immortal Parable he stands as a warning to all who would go and do likewise. He is styled a "wicked and slothful servant;" wicked, because unfaithful to his trust, unthankful for his gift, and because, instead of confessing his sin, he calumniated his lord; and slothful, because he did not bestir himself, and gained nothing for his master, to whom he owed his all.

This part of the Parable sounds a warning note to those, who try to keep their consciences easy, while not using their talent for the Lord who gave it. Though not taking the lead in the career of sin, though avoiding many a forbidden path along which thousands are rushing headlong to ruin, they yet occupy no enviable place among their fellows. They have quenched their light, stifled their convictions, and are drones among the benevolent workers in the busy hive of life. They live unto themselves, and not unto the Lord. The plea that they do no harm to any one is of no avail. It is enough that they are barren trees, unprofitable servants, cumberers of the ground, and are taking up room, and living in the world without doing any good in it. They injure themselves, starve their souls, and degrade their nature; and

withhold from others what they are bound to impart. However inoffensive, they are hurtful to others. Their influence is blighting and not sanctifying, enervating and not stimulating. They chill and discourage the hearts of men, and like noxious weeds scatter their seed among the plants of the Lord. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The want of doing good is injustice to God, and an injury and a loss to mankind, which he will not overlook.

It is not enough that we preserve what we receive, we are bound to increase it, nay, double it if possible. The unprofitable servant restored what had been given him, saying to his lord, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." He returned his talent, but he returned it without interest; and there lay his sin. What we get should grow in our hands. Many, by manly industry, and Christian perseverance, pass by and leave far behind persons originally much more highly favoured in mind and circumstances. Their faculties develope and improve by daily exercise; their hearts are enlarged; their stock of knowledge grows with their growth; their godly habits gain strength by every new act of filial obedience; while the other class make no real progress, and often make shipwreck of their most flattering plans and prospects. The former are slow, but sure; useful, though not brilliant, members of society and of the Church. The latter

would supply the place of industry and self-denial by occasional cleverness; but genius itself, however fertile, when not sustained and fortified by perseverance, must suffer defeat. Its wayward efforts are like a display of fireworks, beautiful and striking, but all is soon over; and when those lights are gone out, the faithful and persevering hold on their way like the sun in the firmament, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

3. The root of the sin of the unprofitable servant is to be found in false views of the character of God.

"Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid." Here is the secret of his unfaithfulness. Morose and unconfiding, he thought his Lord altogether such a one as himself. He transferred to Him his own dark, suspicious, exacting spirit. He went further, and charged Him with injustice in requiring a return from His servants; as if, like Pharaoh, He had demanded the tale of bricks without straw. These false views of God's character froze his heart and paralysed his energies. He was afraid; he had no confidence in the loving-kindness of Him who knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust; and who graciously accepts, in spite of all its imperfections, what is done in a loving and grateful spirit. He wanted that love that casteth

out fear, and fettered by a spirit of bondage, he did nothing. His fear kept him from running into excess; but it prompted him to no generous deeds of love and loyalty.

Though Scriptural views of the Lord's character may lie cold and barren in an unsanctified heart, yet such views are necessary to the exercise of right motives, and the maintenance of an obedient and fruitful life. We do not know Him till we love and trust Him. It is loving confidence in His character that dissolves the sluggishness of the soul; makes obedience its own reward; and prompts us, for His sake, to "scorn delights, and live laborious days." Milton speaks of living as ever in his "great Task-master's eye;" but the idea of Task-master clothes Him in too great austerity, and veils the matchless graciousness of His character, that wins and draws the heart. He is our *Lord*, but He is also our *Friend;* and His friendship has been manifested by blood-bought blessings, and by a love stronger than death. His power is softened by the mild lustre of His love; and His commands are endeared by His promises. We serve One who pleads our cause every hour, and sends down fresh gifts to us every day. What we do for His sake He receives as done to Himself, and honours and rewards it as such. We benefit Him by benefiting those whom He loves. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren,

ye did it unto me." We have His benignant image before us to cheer us on. We behold His hands and His feet, and love constrains us to act. Thus there is no drudgery in His work; and His service is perfect freedom.

When man once gets a firm heart-hold of the glorious truth, "God is love," he possesses the key that makes gates of difficulty fly open before him. He has the oil that causes the grating hinges of the soul to turn smoothly. He who is constrained by the love of Him who is love; who thinks himself an object of affection to that adorable and gracious Being; who believes that he has a place in God's heart; that he is watched over by Him with winning and sleepless tenderness, and crowned daily with His tender mercies; that His parental eye is never off him, and that he is succoured and guarded every moment by His invisible arm; that he is washed in the blood, and healed by the stripes, of His well-beloved Son; and is destined to take his place among the crowned immortals of heaven;—he who believes himself to stand in this relation to the Fountain of love and life, is furnished with the most powerful and pleasant of all incentives to obedience. His faith is not a bald, austere, stoical, and lonely thing; for it works by love, and fills the path of life with music; and makes the water of life run at his side. His self-indulgence is rebuked by the image of his Divine

Friend, and his heart burns within him at the remembrance of His precious promises and tender mercies. Wiping away the tears of penitence which his Father's love has caused to flow, he catches a glimpse of the smile of His countenance, and longs for an opportunity to serve Him. He does not think Him a hard or an unjust Master; but most kind, tender, and gracious. He wonders at His bounty, condescension, and forbearance. Instead of complaining of severity, he gives daily thanks for kindness; and his glowing gratitude seeks vent in gifts of charity and acts of obedience. He is happy in honouring his heavenly Father, who stooped from His throne to snatch him from destruction; and who affectionately lays him as a child in His bosom. No motive to fidelity can so warm his heart, and rouse his energies, as this. It converts self-denial into a pleasure, and duty into a privilege. It renders the heart courageous and fervent. It imparts resolution to turn a deaf ear to temptation; and to pluck from the bosom the dearest idol for His sake. It makes him ingenious in devising ways of pleasing God. His filial obedience is a life-long song of praise.

> "A grateful mind
> By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
> Indebted and discharged."

Future punishment is presented in very dark colours in the Holy Scriptures. All nature is ran-

sacked for terms to describe its appalling magnitude, and endless duration. Images of terror are accumulated from every quarter; as if no single object, however fearful, could give an adequate idea of the horrors to be seen and felt in the place of woe. Every evil in nature is the symbol and representative of something infinitely greater in reserve for the unbelieving and disobedient after death. There is the worm, ever feeding on the vitals, ever gnawing at the heart. There is unquenchable fire, with its excruciating burnings. There are stripes, administered by the hand of Omnipotence. There is outer darkness, banishment from the presence of the Lord, where no ray of Divine favour penetrates to relieve the gloom. One portentous image is piled upon another, and terror is added to terror, forming a lurid picture which awes the heart;—where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Language is strained to the utmost to give an awful vividness to the scene; and it staggers under its overwhelming load. The impression left on a thoughtful mind is, that God would have us to understand that the awful reality exceeds all description and all conception; that knowing the terrors of the Lord we may stand in awe of Him, and sin not.

Without entering minutely into the subject, or enlarging upon details, the solemn strain of warning and prophetical intimation, to which this para-

ble is introductory in the teaching of our Lord, demands a few additional remarks. Jesus lifts the veil and opens to us the judgment of the Last Day; and gives us a glimpse of the agony of the damned. A horrible spectacle meets the eye; and sounds of maddening torment greet the ear. The eternal world is unveiled, that we may look, and remember what we see, when we mingle again in the scenes of time, and are solicited by the temptations of the present world.

1. Future Punishment is a Hell within.

Milton puts into the mouth of Satan these pregnant words, "myself am hell." When not tossed on the restless waves of the lake of fire, he carried with him the flames of the acutest agony in his own dark, malignant spirit. The elements of torture are ever burning in his guilty breast. This also shall be the case with those who shall be condemned for their sins to suffer with the Devil and his angels. We see how miserable evil passions and remorse can render a man on earth, though there be many things to mitigate and relieve his anguish here which shall not be found hereafter; and therefore much more may be looked for in a state of unmixed retribution. There shall be no outward scene of beauty and joy to divert the mind; no amusements to engage and fascinate the heart; and no merry, laughing, witty company to *draw* away the thoughts, and induce forgetfulness

of the anguish of the spirit. The condemned sufferers shall be thrown in upon themselves; and their guilty desires shall turn upon them, and bite like scorpions. Malignity will rend and sting the heart that harbours it. The absence of all restraint will give a fearful velocity and impetus to hatred and revenge, chafing and raging in their impotent efforts to attain gratification. The heart will be a cage of unclean birds, all fighting and preying upon each other. The memory of hopes blasted never to revive, and of joys departed never to return, will add to the bitterness of the feelings. The sense of mercies abused, opportunities neglected, gifts wasted, and light shunned, will give poignancy to their anguish. An accusing conscience will stir its never-dying fire, and goad the heart as with a red-hot iron. Boiling enmity to God will infuse its poison into every thought and affection, like pouring vitriol on a fresh wound. When God shall let the guilty alone, and leave them to the rabid and furious onset of their unchained passions, their own unholy thoughts and feelings will hunt them like a pack of wolves, and give them no rest. There will not be a drop of water to cool their tongue; not a cordial to soothe the self-tortured heart.

2. Future Punishment is a Hell without.

The language of Scripture plainly teaches that there will be a positive infliction of punishment

upon the impenitent. There are inward elements, and outward elements; and the two shall combine to produce retribution; as when the fire from heaven kindled the combustible materials around Sodom and Gomorrah into one mighty and fatal conflagration. The rich man in the Parable is described as opening his eyes in hell, and saying, "I am tormented in this flame," as if enveloped in something external, which penetrated his soul, and shot torture into him. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The cursed depart into this fire, as something prepared before-hand, into which they are thrust by the hand of Divine Justice. They shall be "beaten with stripes," subjected to the lash of outward chastisement. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," for He will pay the servant of sin his wages for which he has been working all his life,—pay him in the burning coin of endless death. "The wicked shall be turned into hell; and all the nations that forget God." They shall have their allotted place, suited to their guilt, and charged with the elements of a righteous retribution. They "treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." He who is all-wise and almighty will be at no loss for instruments to exact the penalty of righteousness. Not an arrow shall miss its mark. He will

whet his glittering sword, and dip it in the blood of his enemies. His "fiery indignation shall devour the adversaries."

3. There are different Degrees of severity in Future Punishment.

Hell is not all equally hot, though all its sufferings are dreadful. There are degrees of guilt in the condemned, and a righteous God has a graduated scale of punishment adapted to every degree. Some men's sins are far more aggravated than those of others, and it would be unjust to confound them in one equal and indiscriminate ruin. The doom of every lost soul is awful; and though, if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch, yet the misleaders and corrupters of mankind shall meet with a more intense and terrible retribution, than those who have not made others the victims of their evil influence. Guilt is proportioned to knowledge and privilege; and where the guilt differs, the penalty will not be the same. Those who have resisted most love, and sinned against most light, shall have most to bear. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the *greater* damnation." "The servant who knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with *many* stripes." "It shall be *more* tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment," than for

those who witnessed our Lord's miracles, and heard His teaching, without repentance. A despised Gospel will entail a more tremendous punishment than a despised law. The vengeance of rejected love is more appalling than the vengeance of rejected authority. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much *sorer* punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." He adds sacrilege to unbelief, and profaneness to disobedience. That wounded, injured mercy will make the plagues heavier, and the vials of wrath more bitter and scorching. Every holy truth that is trampled upon will throw up its sparks in the offender's face; and every invitation of love that is spurned will be an avenger after death.

4. Future Punishment is Eternal.

The language of Scripture, if interpreted according to its natural and obvious meaning, distinctly teaches the doctrine of the eternity of future punishments. In this sense it was understood by those to whom it was originally addressed; and it never suggests a different signification to any readers but those who have adopted a preconceived theory, and who bring to the examina-

tion of the Bible strong prejudices against the doctrine. They do not search the Scriptures in docile simplicity to learn what the Word of God teaches on this subject; but after conceiving a strong aversion to this truth, and making up their minds to reject it, they apply the high pressure of a compulsory criticism to the language of Inspiration, to force it to speak in accordance with their wishes and conclusions.

If any writer should sit down and select the terms best fitted to convey the idea of endless duration, he could not make choice of stronger or more expressive phrases than what God employs in the Bible to denote the eternity of future punishment. To deny that this doctrine is taught there, is virtually to say that no language can be found to express it. Do we not find the same epithets employed to signify the endless duration of the happiness of the blessed beyond the grave, and the perpetuity of the sufferings of the damned? "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Dan. xii. 2. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46. Though our translators use the word *everlasting* in the one part of the latter quotation, and *eternal* in the other, the original word is the same in both cases; and since eternity is predicated

in regard to the life of heaven, it is equally affirmed of the punishment of hell. Let it not be forgotten, moreover, that the eternity of God is taught in Scripture in the same language, to whose continued existence no one presumes to attach a limit. Besides, the whole language of the Bible is consistent and harmonious on this subject. The "fire is unquenchable;" the "worm dieth not;" "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

It may safely be affirmed, that if the same forced and unnatural interpretation were applied to human documents, no language, even the most precise and emphatic, could stand before it. A great outcry was justly raised a few years ago by the doctrine taught by Dr. Pusey, in No. 90 of the Oxford Tracts, that a man might properly sign the Thirty-nine Articles in a non-natural sense, —in a sense different from their true and natural signification. The method adopted by many in their attempts to explain away the clear meaning of the Word of God, on the point under consideration, is open to the same objections. It is an unwarrantable tampering with the evidence of history, and the authoritative testimony of Inspiration. If a bond, or a bill, were so treated, no man's property would be safe. Were a will subjected to such torture, the well-attested wishes of the testator would be set at nought; and a purpose would be

ascribed to him, which never entered his mind. No terms would be binding. A written obligation would be no better than a bit of waste paper. Insecurity and uncertainty would pervade the whole intercourse of man with man.

We hold that the objectors to this doctrine have not a foot of ground to stand upon in Scripture. All their desperate efforts to get the Bible on their side have failed, and must fail. The true secret of their opposition is, that they do not like the doctrine, and think it incompatible with the fatherly character of God, who is love. They are so shocked at the very idea of endless punishment, that they cannot see how it is to be reconciled with the love of God; and they cannot and will not receive it. It would be well for such persons to weigh the consequences of such a mode of reasoning. At what point will they stop? Where will such a style of argument land them, if pursued to its legitimate consequences? It will lead them to reject every truth which they cannot reconcile with some other truth which they hold. It is this mode of thinking which makes the Socinian reject the Trinity, and the atonement of Christ. Such a train of reflection involves the very spirit of rationalism; and brings those who follow it to the conclusion, that nothing is to be believed which they do not understand. Marvellous doctrine! which its advocates contradict and trample upon

every day. They will believe no mysteries; and yet mysteries are stored up within them, and float around them everywhere. The union between soul and body is a mystery, and yet they believe it. Life is a mystery which no man can explain, and yet they believe it. Creation is a mystery, and yet they believe it. The very idea of God, uncreated, and omnipresent, is a mystery, and yet they hold it. Is man, with his limited mind and imperfect knowledge, who sees through a glass darkly, and knows only in part, to find no mysteries in the unfathomable depths of Infinitude,—in the bottomless and shoreless ocean of the Godhead, and in the vast and varied region of Divine government? Difficulties there must be in such a field, from the very nature of the subject. Even holy angels, with all their advantages, stoop to examine the profound depths of the Gospel, as if unable to see the bottom of that deep well; and they get new ideas from the work of Christ on earth; and to them is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

The repudiators of eternal punishment allege that they cannot reconcile this doctrine with the Parental love of God. Let them ponder this question;—Can they reconcile the amount and intensity and duration of suffering in this world with *their notions* of His benevolence? Our globe is under the government of this benevolent Being, and what dark scenes of suffering spring out of

human guilt! For nearly six thousand years man has preyed upon man; and deeds of licentiousness and cruelty have entailed fearful horrors on millions. One generation has passed away after another, but the bitter cup is not empty; insatiable ambition still deluges the world with blood; slavery still crushes and grinds the heart of humanity, applying its lash, and riveting its chains; gaunt, miserable figures meet us in the streets, the very pictures of guilt and wretchedness; the orphan's cry and the widow's wail still curdle the blood, and startle the ear; and still "the angel is flying through the midst of heaven, saying, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth!" The raging fire consumes life and property; and furious tempests entomb many in a watery grave, and fill their bereaved families with mourning and lamentation and woe. How do you account for all this suffering? Does the world not present a mysterious aspect? Sin and suffering stare you in the face; you cannot get rid of the fact. The portentous phenomenon is before your eyes, and is often pealing in your ears; and you retain a firm hold of the benevolence of God notwithstanding.

The conception of God formed by such persons is inconsistent with the character of Him presented in His Word, and daily unfolded in the acts of His government. They picture to themselves a Being so lenient and gentle that He will not punish;

and long for a Father who would ruin any family on earth by His indulgence; and a Ruler, who could not govern a nation from the want of authority and justice. They would bring down God to a moral standard, which they would reject in a fellow-man. They mutilate and disfigure His image, and strike out one perfection to make undue room for another. They efface His justice, to give prominence to His love. They would make Him such a Father as to unfit Him to be a righteous Ruler. This is not the God of the Bible, who says, Vengeance is mine, I will repay; and who in the dominion of His providence smites both individuals and nations. He is love, but His love is pure. He is a Father, but a righteous Father. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, while mercy and truth go before His face.

The whole tenor of Scripture on this subject is designed to inspire a profound sense of the evil of sin, and a solemn and salutary dread of its danger. "Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men." The voice of the Lord thunders in His threatenings, that we may stand in awe of Him and sin not. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" It is so vast and fearful, that it cannot be known. It is presumptuous to set limits to it; and yet some pretend to measure and weigh it, and would exclude this wrath from the amplitude *of eternity*. Were God such a Being as they re-

present Him, and were justice kept in abeyance, and overborne by mercy, there would be no room for such a warning as this:—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

There is a sentimental feeling in minds wanting in robustness and healthiness of tone, that leads them to shrink from the essential ideas of justice. They have very inadequate views of the evil of sin, and are disposed to look very leniently upon the crime of high-treason against the Majesty of God. While they insist upon the manifestation of the fatherly character on the part of God, they leave in the back-ground the duty of filial love and obedience on the part of those who are to be treated and caressed as His children. There are periods in the history of the church when this sickly spirit becomes predominant, and all that is earnest and manly droops and decays. This spirit was very prevalent during the latter part of the last century. There was a careful avoidance of the pungent truths and words of Scripture on the subject of punishment. Either silence was preserved on the unwelcome topic altogether, or smooth things were prophesied, asperities were rubbed off, the doctrine was softened and dressed up in a more agreeable

garb, and less gloomy colours were laid on the dark picture of future woe. Fastidious taste must not be offended, and fashionable ears must not be shocked, with the word "hell." Such a state of mind is unhealthy and dangerous. It is incompatible with sincerity and simplicity of spirit. It shows that religion is more a matter of taste than of heart and conscience; and that the powers of the world to come are not felt. When the religious spirit is direct and simple, this mincing fastidiousness is discarded. When the soul awakes to a right perception of the claims of God, and the perils of sin, the pregnant language of Scripture is felt to be the best vehicle for the struggling thoughts and emotions. There is then no keeping back, or frittering away, of any part of the truth. Things are called by their right names. All is simple, direct, and straight-forward. The heart will not be satisfied with hints, it must have truths. Words are not playthings to gratify the fancy; but the symbols of living realities to feed the soul. The soul is then both hungry and thirsty, and not in a mood to regale itself with the beauty and elegance of the verbal shell; and it loses no time in breaking it, and extracting the food it contains.

Inadequate views of sin and retribution lower the tone of piety on all religious subjects. If we pitch the key-note of guilt and punishment low, we pitch the whole scheme of redemption low. If the

disease be slight, the remedy is proportionally less valued. If the danger be small, the deliverance cannot be thought great. The merit of Christ's atonement is diminished, and the obligations under which we lie to Him are relaxed. The Gospel loses much of its character as glad tidings of great joy; and the incentive to gratitude loses much of its force. Whereas when we look at sin as an infinite evil; as the parent of all our woes; as involving selfishness, unthankfulness, unbelief, and rebellion; as inconceivably hateful to God, and ruinous to man; as entailing endless misery on its impenitent lovers and advocates, and destroying the very capacity of happiness; our hearts swell at the very mention of Christ's name, and we hail Him as a Redeemer to whom we owe a debt we can never pay. We feel that His is a great salvation. Our song of praise gathers fervour from the consideration of the greatness of the evil delivered from, as well as from the greatness of the bliss and glory bestowed. The new song in heaven will rise from more thrilling hearts, and swell with a more glowing fervour, from the knowledge of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Great is the gratitude, and ardent the love, for being rescued from that second death.

The opinion that a period will at last be put to the punishment of the ungodly in another world, and all be restored to Divine favour, is open to other

grave objections, and beset with insuperable difficulties. There is not the slightest hint in Scripture of any season of salvation but what is provided in the present life. Salvation is now, or never. "Behold! now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth *no more* sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." The door of mercy is shut so soon as a man dies, and never shall it be opened again. He passes from probation to retribution. He ceases to have to do with grace, and finds himself in the iron grasp of justice. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind,—when distress and anguish cometh upon you." "After death the judgment." The judgment fills up all behind; and there is not a bright spot to relieve the eye, or comfort the heart.

Besides, what evidence have we that penal fire has any efficacy to produce a change of heart which the Gospel has failed to effect? It has not had any softening, reformatory influence upon

Satan and his legions, who have experienced the wrath of God for thousands of years. Fire has not purged their sin. Their enmity is not abated. They still "work in the children of disobedience." The wicked, by being congregated together, make each other worse, not better. Hell is not a school of reform. Sin will not die out like a fire unsupplied with fuel. The heart will grow harder and harder in the society of the damned. There is no virtue in torture to cure those who are not cured by the Physician of souls. Those will never be melted and won by anguish who are not conquered by the love of Christ. The preaching of curses cannot purify and attract souls that turn a deaf ear to the tender and affectionate invitations of grace. The place of woe is not an hospital for healing the sick; where the prince of darkness saves more than the Prince of peace.

Were sinners converted into saints after death, a far greater multitude would be drafted from hell to heaven, than from earth to heaven. The victories of Christ would be eclipsed; and myriads would enter the gates of the New Jerusalem without being washed in His blood. He would not be the new and living way to them; for they would have a newer way still. They could not sing the new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us

unto our God kings and priests." They would not be numbered among the jewels of His crown; and would appear before Him on a different footing from the redeemed.

Nor should it be forgotten, that the tone of Revelation regarding future retribution does not become more soft and gentle as we descend the line of Sacred History, but more explicit and awful. The trumpet which Christ blows gives no uncertain sound. His warnings and threatenings are fuller and more appalling than those of the Prophets. He who speaks most of love, speaks also most of hell. Nor is the reason difficult to divine. The more ample the revelation, and the more abundant the manifestation of love, the greater is the condemnation of the unbelieving and disobedient. The wrath of the Lamb is the most terrible of all wrath. The appeals of the cross are the most touching of all appeals, and the sin of resistance to them is the most aggravated of all sin. Woe unto those whom Christ's wounds, and tears, and cries, and death do not move! A rejected Saviour will prove an unsparing Judge. I would have healed you, but ye would not be healed. Awful will be the doom of those who meet Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. As none can pluck His people out of His hand to destroy them, none can pluck His enemies out of His hand to save them.

Reader, what are you doing? Are you burying

your talent? Do your privileges sit lightly upon you, without awakening a solemn sense of the obligations under which you lie to the Lord who bestowed them? Your lines have fallen to you in pleasant places, you have a goodly heritage; are your opportunities and advantages consecrated to the honour of God? Is your mind enlarged and cultivated? and is your knowledge and refinement divorced from practical holiness? You belong to a free country; do you possess the spirit of a Christian freeman? Does the name of your country upbraid you for not being true to your position, and dishonouring the badge you wear? Would the spirit you cherish raise any nation to greatness, and not rather reduce a great one to littleness and shame? Do you boast of modern improvement, and add nothing to it? Are you a member of a church, and yet leave the cause of Christ to sink or swim? Are you proud of your Church's Martyrs, and yet dishonour the truths for which they shed their blood? Do you sport fine sentiments, and tread them in the dust in practice? Do you think only of pleasing and serving yourself? Do you flit from object to object like a butterfly? and do you deem this worthy employment for your immortal spirit? How can you expect to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," if nothing is done? Look before you; for you must hereafter give in *your account.* "Behold! the Judge stand-

eth at the door." "In such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh."

Responsibility has two sides, a dark and a bright one. The cloud which hangs over eternity has a bright side to Israel, and a dark side to Egypt. God is light and love to His people, and a consuming fire to His enemies. This law of His government addresses you both in a voice of solemn warning and of gracious encouragement. In the one hand it holds a sword; in the other a crown. It points to a perpetual prison for warning; and to a secure and happy home for hope and consolation. Unfaithfulness cannot elude the rod; and fidelity shall by no means lose its reward. The youngest have a trust and a commission; and you are answerable to God for the use you make of your gifts. You are sent into the world for a noble end, the glory of your Creator and Redeemer; never lose sight of this high and holy aim. While looking in trust to God as your Father, cherish and manifest the spirit of a child of God by reverence, love, and obedience. He is a righteous Lord, as well as a gracious and merciful Parent, and will by no means clear the guilty. He will never forget His own children; He will never cease to cherish and protect them; and will conduct them safely to the place prepared for them by Christ in the house of many mansions. *But* those who will please themselves, and take their

own way, would do well to fear what is due to rebels and criminals, rather than indulge the groundless hope of receiving the rewards reserved for the members of the household of faith.

Knowledge and practice should go hand in hand. Men are to be judged by their works. Truth held in unrighteousness will not save, but condemn us. A sound creed will not counterbalance the effect of a bad life. A holy obedience is the only true indication of a new heart and a Christian spirit. A tree is known by its fruit. Knowledge is power; but it is a power that blasts and condemns, when trodden under-foot; whereas it is power to enrich, and bless, and protect, when it begets love and filial obedience. There is a holy union between them, and the nuptials have been celebrated in heaven. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Should it not be your aim and prayer to cultivate the spirit and exemplify the character of those who, though dead, yet speak? They speak from their graves with a saintly eloquence that makes the heart thrill with solemnity and delight; they speak in the memory of love and prayer and well-doing, which lingers around their tomb, and melts and moves the friendly circle where they were loved and admired. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their

labours; and their works do follow them." Their works follow them in their testimony and effects into eternity; but a fragrant odour of them remains on earth, to soothe and animate those who are left behind. All cannot be distinguished public characters, and have their names enrolled in the heraldry of fame; but all, by Divine grace, may be godly, and partake of the memory of the just which is blest. If you fear God, and keep His commandments; if you walk in the steps of Him who went about doing good; you shall leave those behind you who will drop a tear over your memory. Your very name will be a tower of strength to them in the day of trial. Your words and looks and tones will come back fresh to their remembrance, to arrest them in the course of sin, and encourage them in the path of holiness. Your remembered prayers will help to send them with bended knees and contrite hearts to the mercy-seat. Your words of comfort, and deeds of benevolence, will enshrine you in their hearts; and when you are sleeping in the dust, you shall be a savour of life unto life to them; your image will visit them as with a prophet's power, and warm them with the voice of mercy, when the moaning wind shall be chanting your funeral dirge in the lonely resting-place of the dead. When their mourning weeds are laid aside, and the house is in ruins where you last lived among them; when

they mingle in new scenes, and see themselves surrounded by strange faces, the image of their departed benefactor shall not be forgotten, but like the portrait of a beloved one it will be worn on the heart, and attend them through the world. To their death-bed they will carry your memory, bright with many gleams of joy, and endeared by many acts of love. The good seed you sow may go on reproducing itself, and enlarging its influence, to the end of the world. Like seeds wafted by the winds, or carried by birds to distant lands, which grow up and bear fruit for future generations, the truths you teach may pass from heart to heart, and flourish in remote regions, when the place that now knows you shall know you no more for ever. Poor is the finest tablet erected to commemorate the name and exploits of the brave and the good, compared with having your names inscribed on living epistles, to be known and read of all men. The most magnificent and stable monuments of human glory shall share the wreck and ruin produced by the shock of violence, or the mouldering hand of time. Ere long they shall be dumb, and give no sign ; and treacherously losing all that is committed to them, they shall hand down nothing for posterity to read ; but if you are instrumental in doing good to immortal souls, whether in the Sabbath school, or the sick-chamber, or in any other walk of Christian influence and activity,

your names shall be embalmed in their immortality, written upon those unperishable memorials that shall become pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out. All heaven shall gaze upon those pillars, and read those inscriptions that shall record love felt and deeds done, which God will not let die. Look beyond the boundaries of time, and bring near the solemn realities of the future world, to fortify you against the temptations of the present, and lift your hearts heavenward. Think of the great white throne, and place yourself there in imagination, that you may be the better prepared to appear there in reality. Lead a life of faith in the Son of God, that you may be strong in Him to resist evil and to do good, and when the Bridegroom cometh you may enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"Pensioner of life, be wise, and heed a brother's counsel;
Commend the Past to God, with all its irrevocable harm,
Humbly, but in cheerful trust, and banish vain regrets;
Come to him, continually come, casting all the Present at his feet,
Boldly, but in prayerful love, and fling off selfish cares;
Commit the Future to His will,—the viewless, fated Future;
Zealously go forward with integrity, and God will bless thy faith.
For that feeble as thou art, there is with thee a mighty Conqueror,
Thy friend, the same for ever, yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DOMINION OF THE LORD.

PHILIPPIANS II. 10, 11.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

It will form a not inappropriate conclusion to our remarks on the Parable of the Talents, to take a glance at the universal dominion of Christ. In the Parable of the Pounds, not only is the unfaithful servant punished, but the Lord says, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me." Universal jurisdiction is asserted. He proceeds upon the justice of His title to the obedience of all men, and to call every one of them to account. It is high treason to touch the honours of His crown. None can plead exemption from His authority. All are bound to bow to His dominion, and live under the sway of His righteous sceptre.

He is no usurper, but the lawful Sovereign of all men.

The question naturally arises, What is there in Christ, or in His government, to justify these high claims? Would it be robbery to withhold our allegiance from Him? Is His authority inherent and underived? or is it a reward won by His unparalleled merits? As God, He is the Maker and Upholder of all things, and the Ruler of the universe! and as the God-man, all power is given to him in heaven and on earth. "Because he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name Jesus every knee should bow." This is part of His mediatorial honours for having hung on the cross in the form of a servant, and given His life a ransom for many.

But is there anything in the Spirit of His kingdom to point it out as fitted and destined to be universal? Has His religion the qualities and elements that adapt it for so wide a sway? Is it mild, or despotic? Is it absolute truth? or is it a mixture of truth and error? Does it teach pure and exalted views of God? and exhibit a perfect standard of spiritual and moral excellence to man? Does it cherish faith, love, hope, meekness, humility, patience, and thankfulness, and the other graces that go to make man good, useful, and happy? and

does it brand with condemnation all that is selfish, malignant, proud, and revengeful? While it curbs sinful propensities, and awes the heart by its threatening, does it impart strength and encouragement to its disciples by the help it affords, the prospects it opens, and the hopes it inspires?

There are bright stars visible from some parts of the globe, which shed no light on the horizon of other parts. As the navigator sails over the wide ocean, familiar constellations sink lower and lower in the sky, till they disappear altogether, while others, of new forms and striking brilliance, come in sight, irradiating the heavens with a fascinating glory. Is it so with Christianity? Is it meant and suited only to be a local star, to illumine one portion of the globe, while other regions are to remain in darkness, or have their gloom relieved by a different light? No. Its office is universal. Christ came to be the light of the world. The Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, that His rays may shine in every land, and all flesh see the salvation of God. Some plants grow only in particular places and climates. They droop and die when transported from their favour ite region. Christianity is not a plant of this type; for, like man, it can live in every part of the earth. It blossoms and bears fruit among the snows of the North, and under the burning heat of the South. Truth was not designed to be limited to a single

district of the globe. It is good for man everywhere; and should encircle the world like the air we breathe.

I shall now advert to some of the reasons that lead to the belief that Christianity is adapted and intended to be Universal.

I. Christianity is fitted to be Universal.

This part of the subject is divisible into several branches.

1. Christianity has no restrictive Peculiarity to confine it to one place, or age, or people.

Judaism was necessarily local, its whole spirit and framework marking it as limited in its range and operation. Beyond the bounds of a restricted territory and a particular race it could not with efficiency extend. With its temple at Jerusalem, to which the male population of the Jews were commanded to repair thrice a year to pay their vows, and offer their sacrifices to the Lord, it could never become universal; for if it had covered the earth, its requirements could not possibly have been obeyed by persons inhabiting remote regions of the globe. Judaism was the egg of a better Dispensation, laid in Judæa as in a sheltered nest; but when the celestial Bird was hatched, the broken shell was left behind, and it spread its wings to fly round the world. The old economy was but the scaffolding for erecting a more magnificent build-

ing; a cradle for rearing a nobler offspring to God; a school of the prophets, to train mankind for receiving a more spiritual Dispensation, even a kingdom that cannot be moved.

Christ came to remove the partition-walls between the different nations of the earth, that He might gather into one fold under one Shepherd all the families of man. When He cried on the cross "It is finished," the knell of Judaical worship was rung, and a universal worship proclaimed. The temple of Jerusalem had done its appointed work, and stood its appointed time; its glory was departing; and the temple in which the Father was to be worshipped was henceforth to be co-extensive with the globe. The throne of Grace, where Christ now sits at His Father's right hand, pleading the cause of His people, is accessible to man in every quarter of the earth. No rugged height is to be scaled, no sea or river crossed, no long pilgrimage encountered, to reach the sacred spot where the favour of God is to be found. God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; and there is not a foot of ground in the wide world where the Father of mercies may not be met in that holy and safe trysting-place. All is holy ground to the eye of faith, and in the light of the Gospel. Superstition erects barriers, and imposes limits, but they receive no sanction from the Lord. They savour

of the legal element; and are opposed to the spirit of Christianity. Local sanctity has no place in the teaching of Christ. The field is the world; and the advocates of limited consecration virtually throw obstacles in the way of the propagation of truth, and righteousness, and love. They would cork up the pure air, and prevent its diffusion for the healing of the nations. Jesus preaching from a boat, and Paul kneeling in prayer with the weeping disciples on the sea-shore at Tyre, offer a grave rebuke to this ignorant and narrow spirit. Wherever man has a home, there God may have an altar. Wherever we wander, there we may seek and find God,—unbosom to Him all our fears and sorrows in our solitude, and unite with others to implore His mercy and blessing. Jerusalem is at the door in every place, where the heart yearns for God in Christ. The stars of heaven are the temple lamps; the organ-melody of the sea, the sighing of the winds in the trees, and the murmuring of the streams, are its music; the voice of the prayerful is its worship, and the gifts of Christian benevolence its thank-offerings. Under the whole wide canopy of heaven may the worshipper in spirit and in truth bow the knee to Christ's Father and our Father; and whether in his own house, or in public temples made with hands, he approaches the mercy-seat, his prayers go up before God; Divine

love yearns over him; the smile of heaven welcomes him; and he carries away the blessing that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.

As the religion of Christ has not a local aspect, so neither has it a national one. It deals with man in his essentials, and not in his conventionalisms. The Lord of the conscience is not taken up with externals, but demands the heart of every man. He knows no distinction between Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. He takes men of all nations to His heart, washes them in His blood, clothes them with His righteousness, crowns them with His mercy, and constitutes them heirs of all His blood-bought blessings. None that come unto Him does He cast out. He unites them to Himself by faith and love, and forms them into one family by the sacred ties of a holy and endless brotherhood. He is the Centre of unity, and the union is sublime and eternal. It exists under every national costume, and pervades men of every blood. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John xvii. 21.

II. Christianity is not restricted to any form of civil government, but is capable of benefiting man under all forms thereof.

Wherever Christianity obtains a lodgment, and is

allowed to exert its legitimate sway over the sentiments and institutions of a people, it gradually improves the spirit of their government and remedies its defects. But while it shields and fosters what is good, and lays the axe to the root of what is bad, it does not proclaim war against any mode of civil rule. The Gospel was cradled and nursed under the iron sway of Imperial Rome, and though long the victim of its cruelty and persecution, and ever the enemy of all oppression, Christianity never laid Imperial Power under the ban of its condemnation. The subjects of Christ's kingdom may with a good conscience live under the shadow of different kinds of government; for loyalty to their Divine Head does not require them to enrol themselves only under one earthly dominion. Though they may not approve of all that is done by the government of the country to which they belong, they can live as Christians there, being only required to refuse compliance, as the Apostles did, when asked to do what is opposed to the dictates of conscience and the clear light of God's word. Accordingly, we find Christianity flourishing under the limited monarchy of the British Islands, the aggressive energies of the American Republic, and the dominion of Chiefs in the widely scattered Islands of the Indian Ocean. It can be run into moulds of various shape and size, and convey blessings to men living under different institutions. Without sur-

rendering or compromising any of its essential principles, it has a marvellous elasticity, and power of adaptation to the wants and habits of a people. It is a leaven that can work its way into societies distinguished by dissimilar customs, and manners, and laws, and shed a purifying influence upon them all. Lamps vary in pattern and form, but it is the same light that makes them shine; and the light of the Gospel can be enjoyed with different institutions, like different globes that modify its clearness and intensity. Some vessels are large, and some small; one is made of gold, another of silver, another of brass or iron, and another of clay; but the same water fills them all, and adapts itself to their various shapes and dimensions. In like manner the water of life can flow into various organizations, though one may be as superior to the other as gold is to clay. Some governments are more favourable to Christianity than others, being more in accordance with its pure and merciful Spirit, more friendly to the spread of its heavenly principles, to the development of its benignant energies, and to its sublime triumphs of truth and love; but wherever it reigns, it creates and fosters a spirit of stanch, enlightened, and devoted loyalty; and improves the hearts and lives both of rulers and subjects. In the days of Imperial Rome, no braver soldiers were found in the ranks of her armies than the men whose only

fear was to commit sin. They were true to the standard under which they fought. And in our own struggles with insatiable and despotic ambition, that would commit robbery under the mask of religion, that would grasp at another's rights, and trample down truth, liberty, and mercy; our countrymen who are foremost in withstanding the shock of hostile attacks, who are coolest in danger, and stand when others fly; who, undaunted amid showers of shot and shell, carry havock and dismay into the enemy's ranks, are those whose loyalty to their Queen and country is tempered and elevated by loyalty to their heavenly King. They fear no foe, because they fear their God. Their natural courage is directed and sustained by their religion. Their hearts are true to their Divine Ruler; and therefore true to their human ruler. Their hands not only wield weapons of war, but grasp also the sword of the Spirit, and are lifted up in prayer to the Lord of hosts. Loyalty is an element of their religion, and is enshrined among the warm pulsations of the new heart.

III. Christianity is adapted to the Universal wants of Man.

Man has wants which lie deep in his heart, and are inseparable from his fallen nature. They are confined to no particular locality; they are produced by no peculiarity of outward condition;

but cling to him under every garb and hue. They go with him where he goes; they dwell with him where he dwells. He cannot shake them off, nor scare them away. They follow him more closely than his shadow through the world. He is born with the seeds of them in his soul; and they often grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength, gnawing at his vitals, undermining his energy, and at last laying him in the grave. They mock all human remedies, and require a Divine hand to reach their roots and effect a cure.

1. Sin.

All these deep, universal wants, Christianity meets and provides for. There is sin, that black plague-spot that adheres to the soul. How are the stains of guilt to be washed out? How is sin to be pardoned? How is the fountain of iniquity to be dried up? How is the groaning soul to be pacified, and the burning sting-wounds of remorse mollified? The Gospel comes with the needful remedy in its hand. It points to Christ, and says, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It provides a balm for the wounded conscience, and peace to the troubled spirit; it teaches us to lay our aching heads on the bosom of Jesus; and to come into God's presence not trembling as slaves under His frown, but with the confiding and loving spirit of His children, rejoicing in His smiles, and calling Him

Father. The voice of Christ is heard addressing us in the most tender and winning accents, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is to be found in no other way. There is no true peace, till we have peace with God through Christ. The burden remains, and cannot be rolled off. Without the sweet, soothing influence of Jesus, who applies the balm of Gilead to the sin-smitten soul, the heart is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." He who stilled the raging winds and waves, can alone tranquillize the guilty and agitated soul, and produce a great and an abiding calm.

2. Character of God.

Man also needs correct views of God to save him from those delusions into which he plunges, presenting hideous caricatures of God, and dressing up an object of worship for himself, shaped by his fancy or his fears. Notwithstanding all the convulsive efforts and proud boastings of infidelity, man cannot live without some idea of God. If without the knowledge of the one living and true God, he will make a false one for himself; all the more hurtful and debasing because it is the creation of his own disordered mind. Christianity provides for this deep necessity of the human soul, by unfolding just views of the Supreme Being. God appears before us in the Gospel, combining in

Himself every perfection, without the slightest taint or admixture of evil. He is just, yet merciful; holy, and yet a God of love. He reigns in heaven, and on earth; and all the temporal mercies that sweeten our daily lot, and all the spiritual blessings which draw the heart upward, and prepare it for heaven, flow from His gracious heart, and are dispensed by His bountiful hand. The contemplation of false gods tends to debase and pollute the worshipper, because foul blots and crimes stain the imaginary objects of adoration; whereas the contemplation of the God of the Gospel purifies and elevates the soul. And when the unbeliever presents to himself one God, and rejects the gods many and the lords many of the heathen, He is placed at such a distance from the heart, and is shorn of so much of His personality, and is so vague and unreal, that He has no more influence upon the character than a dim star scarcely visible in the remote heavens. We imitate what we love and admire. The God of the Gospel, though far above us, is brought nigh to us in Christ, in all the plenitude of Divine perfection, and all the warmth of Fatherly love. The presentation of such transcendent excellence to the mind, arrayed in a beauty well fitted to attract and win the heart; the contemplation of a faultless pattern, where there is not a blemish to mar its loveliness, or impair its efficacy, tends to repress the love of sin,

to lift us into a higher region and draw us into a purer atmosphere, to foster holy impulses and excite heavenly aspirations, changing us into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

3. Truth.

Man needs truth to exercise his mind. His thoughts must be occupied about something, and if they have not the bread of truth to feed upon, they will fasten upon the empty husks of error; if they have not something to grind, like an empty mill injuring its machinery, they will eat in upon themselves. Man will form opinions of one kind or another; and if materials are not provided for him from a Divine source, he will weave a web for himself out of the rotten, broken, earth-dyed, and tangled threads of human tradition and speculation; and this home-made web, instead of proving warm clothing to his soul, will serve as a net to entangle his feet, and render him an easy prey to the spoiler.

Now Christianity presents absolute truth to the mind. It throws light on all the great absorbing questions, that have been a source of perplexity to thoughtful men. It discloses to us the true character of God, and the real condition of man. It shows us how sin came into the world, and how it is to be driven out of it. It sets before us the prince of darkness as our tempter, and the Son of God as our Saviour. It reveals to us the gay,

shadowy glory of time, and the surpassing grandeur of eternity. It tears off the mask from the face of the unreal, and exposes the hollow and rotten heart it conceals. It leads us to prize the simple and unpretending, and to discover a treasure under its plain exterior. No man, with the Gospel in his hand, can justly say, I have nothing to think of; my mind is rusting for want of exercise. To such a person we may reply, Mysteries are laid open to you, which angels desire to look into. "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Problems, inscrutable to the unassisted mind, are solved in the clear noonday of revelation. Lights, which others have vainly struggled to reach, are suspended like lamps at your very door. Eternal, unclouded truths shine over your head, bright as the stars of heaven. You have enough to occupy you to your dying hour. Truth looks in at the window of your soul, and, like the dove perched on the ark, invites you to open the window, and put out your hand and take it in. Do not tire it out, and tempt it to fly away. Welcome the messenger of peace with the olive-leaf in its mouth; and make a friend and companion of everything that dispels the clouds that hang round the character of God, and that justifies the ways of God to man.

4. Death.

From the earliest dawn of history we find the human mind occupied with the mysteries of death. When a man dies shall he live again? was a question which came back again and again to reflecting men, vainly endeavouring to pierce the clouds, amid the first glimmerings of the morning twilight of human life. To this solemn question, the mind of man, without light from above, has never been able to give a satisfactory answer. Man but guesses, and gropes his way in the dark, stumbling and plunging in his hopeless course. He looks over the wall of time into cloud-girt eternity; but his strained eyes discover no land. He stands on the shore of the far-stretching ocean, and he knows not what lies beyond those ever moving, ever murmuring waves. In a moment of clearer light, when he does seem to catch a glimpse of what lies beyond those dark borders, it looks to his guilty conscience like a land separated by a deep and angry flood. He sees no bridge spanning the dread gulf. Mortal hands never constructed, and mortal arms never rowed, a boat that can live in that sea, and convey him to yonder side. Bewildered and alarmed, he shrinks from the gloomy scene. Speculation can make nothing of it. If there is a hell there, How am I to keep out of it? If there is a heaven there, How can I, a sinner, get into it?

Christianity does not mock this craving desire to look through the veil of death, with a vague and hazy cloud-land. It does not deal in conjectures. There is no "perhaps" in its promises. It lifts the veil, and discloses a life beyond the grave. It reveals a world as real as the present, and far more lasting. Christ came from that world, and has returned to it. He laid down His life and took it up again; and after being three days in Paradise, revisited the earth, and appeared to His disciples at intervals during the space of forty days. But the Gospel has done more than this. It not only assures us of the existence of a world after death, but it also teaches us how to attain happiness and glory there. Life and immortality are brought to light by Christ in the Gospel. We are not brought to the bank of that mighty gulf-stream that runs between time and eternity, and left to shiver and wail there in hopeless agony; for Christ is the Guide to the happy land, the Way to the Father, and to the home of the saints. That God who divided the Red Sea and the flooded Jordan, and led the Israelites in triumph through those watery barriers, has opened a safe path to His people through the dark river of death; and is preparing a place for them in the house of many mansions. Thus is the gloom of the grave dispelled, and light streams into the noisome dungeon. They have a Guide and Guardian through the valley of death-shade. To

them the grave is the gate of heaven. Though many tears are shed there, and the bosom heaves with many a deep and bitter sigh, it is associated with the brightest hopes, and shall form the scene of their noblest triumphs. There shall they at last wave the flag of victory, and chant the triumphal song, "O death! where is now thy sting? O grave! where is now thy victory?"

5. A Personal Saviour.

Another of those universal wants of man is, his need of a Personal Saviour and Comforter. The most beautiful truths and the richest promises do not meet our necessities. They fall cold on the heart, if they are not associated with a Friend from whose love they flow. No soul can be fed with mere theological systems, or orthodox creeds, or fine-spun theories of abstract truth. Theological truths are but the bones of the skeleton; and we must have those bones clothed with flesh and blood,—with a pure, warm, and faithful heart beating within. We must have One who knows us, thinks upon us, feels for us, watches over us, and helps us, and will prove a Companion, a Friend, and a Brother.

This provision is amply made in the Gospel. Every doctrine and promise has its root and fulfilment in Jesus. As Divine, He lays all the resources of the Godhead at our feet. As human, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, acquainted

with pain, sorrow, and want, temptation, fear, and death, who trod the earth on which we live, and was buffeted with the trials by which we are assailed, who hung and died for us on the bitter cross; He draws us to Himself by the cords of love and fraternal sympathy. He comes down to our level, that He may lift us up, and set us beside Himself in heavenly places. He does not despise us, nor turn away from us in disdain. He does not look at us with a hard heart and fierce countenance. He makes our case His own. He bends over us in tender compassion as we lie wounded and helpless at the road-side; and gently binds up our wounds, and generously provides for our recovery. We need an Advocate to plead our cause, and to assure us that our prayers will be answered. We need succour which no mortal arm can bring; and He makes the throne of God a place of refuge, where we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Thus are all our springs in Him, who is the loveliest and the kindest that ever set foot upon our globe; whose love is stronger than death, deeper and broader than the sea. We can unbosom ourselves without fear, and cling, in the assurance of faith, to Him who goes with us through fire and water; out of whose heart no power can tear us, and out of whose hand no foe can pluck us. Should not every heart say, This

is the Saviour I need and long for; this is the Saviour for me?

6. The Body.

The body has wants which require to be provided for. A religion that comes from God will not be so ethereal as to ignore those wants. The sensualism that pampers the body, and the asceticism that starves and lacerates it, are both opposed to the will of God. The body is a noble piece of workmanship; and though we are bound to keep it under, it is not to be treated with dishonour, as if there was sin in its mysterious springs and material organization. Sin adheres to mind, and not to matter; and though we are commanded to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to curb the passions which derive their aliment from its influence, we are bound to admire it as the most wonderful piece of mechanism in the world, which mirrors to every intelligent eye the wisdom and goodness of the Maker.

Our Lord showed His sympathy with mankind in their bodily sufferings by healing their diseases, and providing a miraculous supply of food for the hungry. He is the Saviour of man, including both soul and body, and will remodel, after a glorious fashion, the mortal tabernacle that crumbles to dust in the tomb. His religion fosters those affections and habits most favourable to health; and

inspires a spirit of benevolence, which weeps with them that weep, and loves to mitigate and remove the corporeal ailments that flesh is heir to. While teaching us to set the highest value upon the soul, Christianity renders its disciples alive to every-thing that affects the happiness of man. Accordingly, trophies of mercy mark its progress, which were unknown to ancient civilization. Hospitals and Infirmaries for the sick and the wounded are among the monuments of its triumphs of love. It summons science and skill to the help of the distressed, and to the cure of the maladies that afflict our race. It kindles that generous sympathy, that provides an asylum for the poor when disease smites them to the ground; and it calls in experience and kindness to minister to their relief. It takes the helpless and afflicted in its arms, and carries them to a place of shelter; and feeds and nurses them, binds up their wounds, and mollifies them with ointment. Poor are the finest monuments of ancient art compared with those refuges of mercy, where benevolence thinks not of show, but of doing good, and finds its reward in succouring the miserable. Thus is the Physician of souls the greatest Benefactor of the body. He is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, and He wipes away the tears from the eyes of the downcast. He is the good Samaritan, who takes pity on the man left half dead on the way-side, and generously provides for

his recovery and comfort. Others pass by and leave the sufferer uncared for; but He stops, and loads him with kindness. Not only to the poor is the Gospel preached; but Christ brings a message of glad tidings to the poor and needy of the land regarding the crosses of their daily lot, and provides warm hearts and liberal hands for their good.

Our Lord's teaching is full of encouragement and comfort on this point. He teaches us to contemplate the Fatherly Providence of God as embracing and watching over the smallest things pertaining to this life. "Take no thought (be not over-anxious) for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matt. vi. 25—30. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground

without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matt. x. 29—31. These examples seem to have been selected for the purpose of showing that there is nothing too minute for God's Fatherly care in providing for the wants of the body. Is it food that is exciting your anxiety? Look at that sparrow. It is a bird of little value. Expose it to sale, and it will bring a very small price. Yet your heavenly Father feedeth it. See it lighting to pick up a crumb. That crumb was put there for it by God. If your Father provides for that little bird which is held in such slight esteem, will He forget His own dear children, who cry to Him for bread? Is it the thought of clothing that distresses you? Behold those lilies. Have they not a lovely dress? How elegant and beautiful they look! Who arrayed them in a garb of such exquisite shape and colour? It was God. And if He so decks and adorns the flowers of the field, will He not furnish a covering for the beloved members of His own household? When your faith droops, take a look at the flowers and the birds, that your fears and cares may fly away. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Leave to-morrow to God, and He will take care both of it and you.

Christ honours and ennobles daily toil. He attaches no disgrace to the man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. He wrought as a carpenter in the shop of His reputed father; and chose for His disciples men whose hands were hardened by daily labour. He makes every sphere of life honourable, where God is served in spirit and in truth. No man has reason to be ashamed of his lowly position, who carries into the humble walks of self-denying industry the spirit of a child of God. Paul was noble and kingly in his tent-making; for the apostolic fire was burning in his heart when he was handling the hammer and plying the needle, as well as when he was preaching the Gospel and offering up prayer to God. Christianity makes all things glorious, and turns the civil and the temporal into the sacred. It reverses the decisions of the world, and puts the last first, and the first last. It sheds a lustre on the meanest lot, and on the poorest man that breathes, in whose breast beats a heart of love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does such a man pray, when on bended knees he lifts up his heart to his heavenly Father, but the very work of his hands is worship, when in a spirit of contentment and filial obedience he works hard to support himself and his family, and by his consistent industry adorns the Christian name he bears.

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery Divine.
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine."

7. Prayer.

The heart craves for sympathy, and longs to pour its wants and desires into the ear of God. An earnest, awakened soul must pray. The privilege of petition to the King of heaven is a precious privilege. The doctrine that our Father in heaven is a prayer-hearing Father, is a doctrine admirably suited to our necessities and longings. We are drawn to the throne of grace by the belief that God will supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

But the Gospel teaches that God is the Hearer of prayer, not only as to spiritual and eternal things, but also as regards bodily wants and comforts. All that concerns this life, as well as the life to come, may be laid before Him. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; and he shall sustain thee. Be careful about nothing, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The least thing that affects our bodily state, or temporal condition, or the welfare of those who are dear to us, we may

fly to Him about. We shall not be accus troubling Him with things which are beneatl notice, and which we might dispose of wi Him. Not a pain or a want, not a feeling of v ness or languor, not a meal we take, but w invited to make it the subject of prayer. " us this day our daily bread." Thus does C tianity embrace both worlds, and shed upon a pleasant light. "Godliness is profitable all things; having promise of the life that n and of that which is to come."

8. The Family.

The grand nursery for cultivating man's nature is the family. Here the heart is warmed by loving smiles, affectionate words kind acts. Here gracious affections bloom u the radiant beaming of a mother's eye, the en ing music of her voice, and the kindly offi her hands. The older members protect the y and the strong help the weak. Reciprocal a love link heart to heart. Common joys and mon sorrows bind them together. There charm about home, more especially if it be a C tian one, which speaks powerfully to every It sheds a sunny and genial influence upo opening affections and graces of young bu hearts. There, memory recalls its first sce enjoyments, the first looks, and tones, and [redacted]d gifts of love. In the domestic asylum

child feels both secure and free. Thither every heart turns for rest, when mind and body are weary and sigh for repose. Parents and children are benefactors to each other; and by the outflow of mutual affection, and the interchange of kind words and acts, they acquire a spirit and habits which qualify them for the great duties of life. In the family-school authority is tempered by love; and obedience is sweetened by a sense of gratitude to known and tried friends.

Now, the Gospel is the patron and guardian of domestic virtue and peace. It develops our social nature by purifying the domestic sanctuary. It promotes love and confidence, and teaches us to be lovers of home, and to imbibe the genial influence which home inspires. It draws a circle round the family, shields it from the intrusion of violent passion, and the profanation of wrath and ungodliness. It makes it a nursery of mutual love, a school of purity, and a Bethel of devotion, where freedom and self-restraint go hand in hand. It is the presiding power of Christianity in the family, that has given Great Britain her pre-eminence among the nations of the earth, her stability in eras of convulsion, and that manliness of character which combines delicacy and modesty with vigour and courage. The Gospel-leaven from the family diffuses itself through society, and purifies the blood of the nation. Under the gentle influence

of a Christian home plants are reared, which afterwards thrive and bear fruit amid the biting blasts and violent storms of the world. Many a hero learnt his first lessons when kneeling in prayer at his mother's knee. The sweet image of that pious mother will melt his heart, and restrain his foot from sin, when far from the home where he spent his childhood, and enjoyed the training of parental love. A country filled with Christian families, has a body-guard in every house where Christ reigns. Every one feels he has a stake in a country who has a home that he loves. Warm associations are entwined round his heart, and he will not rashly commit himself to a course likely to endanger the safety and happiness of so dear a treasure. It will be a dark day for our nation when the religion of Jesus shall be expelled from our families; when the gospel-lamp shall go out in the household; and young lips shall cease to be taught to lisp the name and truth of Him, who took little children in His arms and blessed them; when the domestic hearth and the domestic altar shall no longer conspire to ennoble our patriotism; and the foundation of the character shall no longer be laid in the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. Our national character will fall, the tone of our social feelings will be lowered, our integrity will suffer an eclipse, and our religious and moral influence will pass away. Let the domestic circle,

on the other hand, be impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel, and the nation will be safe and sound, and the Church of Christ will flourish. Those family-wells will water and refresh the land. A virtue will go out to heal and to purify the body-politic. The attitude of the people will be one of meekness and faith. Under the overshadowing wings of Christ, the nation will be nursed and sheltered, and grow in strength, in dignity, in usefulness, and happiness; its heart warmed by infinite love, and shielded by the arm of omnipotence.

IV. Christianity is adapted to all classes of men.

A Latin poet writes, "I hate the profane common people, and drive them away." He wrote only for cultivated and courtly ears, though he published many things which it would have debased the lowest to read. His pearls were too valuable for such swine. In the same spirit ancient philosophy had its secret doctrines for the initiated and the learned, and its superstitions for the credulous and despised people. Its inner doctrines were thought too good for such persons, and their rude ears were never greeted with their sound. A great man inscribed over the door of his academy, "Let none unversed in mathematics enter here." All who could not pronounce the mathematical Shibboleth were rigorously excluded,

however intent on the acquisition of knowledge and the attainment of virtue.

The truth which the Gospel teaches, the character it forms, and the help and comfort it provides, are suited to persons of every age, and rank, and nation. It is not designed to be the religion of a class, but the religion of our race. There is none too high for it to reach; none too low for it to stoop to. It is not intended to keep one portion of mankind in subjection, and leave others at liberty to do what they please; but the circle of its holy and gracious dominion is for all ranks and orders. The Gospel is for man in every phase of his character, and under every variety of his condition. It offers its treasures to rich and poor, to the learned and the unlearned.

Accordingly, it embraces all ranks in its capacious bosom; and teaches high and low to maintain their proper relation to God, and to one another. It teaches rulers to act as subjects of the King of kings; and the more deeply they are imbued with its spirit, the more conscientious are they in the exercise of their authority, the more paternal is their government, and the more do they consult the true welfare and happiness of all under their sway. Christianity is a religion for subjects; for it instils principles, and fosters affections and habits, which render them quiet, industrious, and loyal; the safeguard of a nation in war,

and a source of strength and prosperity in peace. It is a religion for the rich; for it commands them not to be high-minded, but fear; to be humble and sober-minded on the dizzy heights of prosperity; to consider themselves stewards of what they possess; not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. It is a religion for the poor; for it teaches them not to be envious or discontented; to labour industriously in their several callings; provide for those of their own households, and prove fruitful branches of the community. It provides them with the best comfort in sorrow, and the greatest encouragement in difficulties; directs them to the Son of God, who, though rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich; and shows them how they may be rich in grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory. It is a religion for the old; for it provides a staff to lean upon when every other staff fails; a Divine arm to support them when arms of flesh are broken; though the outward man perish, it causes the inner man to be renewed day by day; it makes the hoary head a crown of glory by being found in the way of righteousness; and it relieves the gloom of the valley of the shadow of death by admitting the cheerful light of the sure hope of a blessed immortality. It is a a religion for the young; for it directs and unfolds

their opening energies; guides their ardour without damping it; renders them docile and obedient without souring their temper or extinguishing their joy; and by teaching them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, fits them for an honourable career in early life, and disciplines them for the duties and trials of more advanced years. It is a religion for parents; for it instructs them to rule well their own households; to have their children in subjection; to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to make their homes abodes of love, and peace, and prayer. It is a religion for children; for it requires them to honour their father and mother; to make their own will bend to theirs; to be happy to please them, and sorry to offend them; to be a stay and comfort to them in sorrow, a prop to them in the pinching hour of want, and a sweet solace amid the gathering infirmities of old age. It is a religion for masters; for it commands them to forbear threatening, and to give unto their servants what is just and equal, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven. It is a religion for servants; for it teaches them not to answer again; to obey, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God; whatsoever they do, doing it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. It is a religion for husbands and for wives, for pastors and for people, for brothers and for sisters, for bond

and for free; prompting all classes to attend to the duties of their respective spheres in life; and to remember what they owe to God, and to each other. It is not nourishment to one and poison to others, but life, and health, and beauty to all.

V. Christianity tends to mitigate and remove all the social evils that afflict and depress mankind.

Not a few of those in political circles who, in our day, are trying to raise the degraded masses from the festering elements of debasement in which they are weltering, are actuated by fear. Long deaf to the appeals of Christian philanthropists, they have at last caught a glimpse of their danger, and tremble at the explosion of the mine under their feet, which may bury them and all they may most prize in its ruins. They are alarmed at the idea of the outburst of ferocious passions and gigantic muscular power, sharpened by envy, and whetted by revenge; trampling upon everything sacred, and noble, and dear; levelling our most valuable institutions; invading the sanctities of families; destroying property; drying up the springs of trade; shedding innocent blood; and putting all our social fabric out of joint. The giant is sleeping at their door, and they tremble lest he should awake, and seize them for his prey. Such persons would have been eaten up years ago, had not the Gospel been working in the heart of society, and imposed a restraint

upon the fierce elements of human nature. But for the presence of this silent safeguard, our nation would have heaved with convulsion long ago. Criminal laws are a weak defence compared with Christianity. A Church, where the Gospel is preached, is much more potent than a jail, to keep men in order, and turn hatred into love. From such a vital centre emanates a power that tames the fiercest, whom no chains can bind; and induces them to sit down in meekness and gentleness at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind.

The disciples and advocates of the Gospel are constrained by love, to apply to the social evils of their day the only remedy which they know to be sovereign. They are not averse to the adoption of any measure or means calculated to relieve the virulence of the disease; but they know that all are mere palliatives and surface cures without the application of the remedy appointed by God. The Gospel is the enemy of all cruelty and oppression, of every disposition, and habit, and institution that poisons society. It takes the part of the weak against the strong, and of right against might. Its voice is lifted up against wrong of every kind. Its influence tends to sweeten the bitter cup of man all the world over, to "chain up the unruly legion of the breast, and lead captivity captive."

1. Slavery.

Slavery is one of the direful evils, which is a

fruitful source of suffering and crime wherever it rears its hydra-head. In every part of the globe where the spirit of the Gospel is cordially cherished, and faithfully carried out, slavery receives its death-blow. The first fruit of its dominion is to ameliorate the condition of the slave, and afterwards to effect his freedom. It introduces a style of thought and feeling hostile to human bondage. It proclaims all men equal in the sight of God. It recognises the relation of brothers in all who believe in the Lord Jesus, and produces a state of feeling between man and man that renders slavery impossible. The Christian philanthropy of this country led it to lay twenty millions sterling on the altar of liberty, that the down-trodden African might have equal rights with others, and feel that he was a man and a brother. Though men of little or no religion threw themselves into the movement, and helped forward the benevolent cause, the true heroes of the fight were Christians, whom the Lord had made free. Such men as Clarkson, and Wilberforce, and Buxton, led the forlorn hope, and toiled late and early, to strike the last link of the chain of bondage from the heel of the slave. They gave to the struggle a lofty tone; and transferred it from the region of the political to the spiritual.

Alas! the foul blot of slavery still stains the banner of a great people in the west, who boast on

paper that all men are equal, and trample the great truth under-foot in practice. The annual reading of the Declaration of Independence should crimson the cheek of America with a blush of shame. In asserting her rights she reads her own condemnation. She is condemned out of her own mouth. It is sad that a people in many respects so noble, and destined in the wise and good Providence of God to accomplish a great work in the history of the world, in diffusing Christian truth, and advancing the cause of civil and religious liberty and civilization, should tarnish their fair name, and stain their hands with the blood of the slave. What miserable shifts does it drive them to, in order to uphold a system so vile and so cruel, so inconsistent with the religion they profess, and their loud boasting about freedom! How eagerly they catch at any flimsy theory that promises to prove that all mankind are not sprung from the same pair; and to turn a favourable ear to reasoning, which, in an unbiassed and disinterested state of mind, they would denounce as hollow and unsound! What a snare does it lay for ministers of the Gospel to call evil good, put bitter for sweet, and darkness for light; and to call by smooth names, and dress up in a delusive garb, a system which degrades, and lacerates, and vilifies humanity! The guilt is all the greater, because of the progress of society, and the clear

light that now shines in the world. They are wounding Christ by crushing their fellows, and loving darkness rather than light. Their sin will find them out. Their moral weight is weakened by this foul cancer. Their great mission to do good in the world, as the representatives of noble ideas, and the channels of salutary influences in the onward march of the human race, is hampered, and greatly neutralized, by this social plague. Physician, heal thyself, rises to every lip. It is vain to retort upon others, and to say, Look at home, regarding evils they are labouring to cure and root out, while the Americans are fostering, and propping up, and extending their social leprosy. David could not open his lips to speak to others of their duty to God, till he repented of his own sin. A sense of guilt repressed his courage, and made him dumb. So America cannot speak with a good grace, or with effect, of the crimes of others, while she presses the slave-viper to her bosom. Let her take the stars out of her banner, and retain the stripes alone, so long as she is resolved to breed and keep slaves. The stars of heaven are not in keeping with bloody stripes. The stars preach light, and love, and freedom.

But the flood of Christian feeling is rising, and it will at last sweep over all the petty barriers of despotic power and selfish gain. There are brave, warm Christian hearts in that land of energy and

youthful ardour; they have the prayers and the sympathy of thousands in this and other countries; and let them not cease to exert themselves to wipe out this foul blot from their national scutcheon. The great truth has gone forth from the mouth of Jehovah, that God hath made of one flesh all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth, and that they are equally invited to be partakers of the grace of life; and the rising wave of Christian love and justice will eventually overturn all that opposes the will of God. The honour of Christ demands the abolition of American slavery. Liberty demands it. Justice demands it. Mercy demands it. The Dagon, that has all these against him, must fall.

2. War.

War is another of those dire visitations that desolate the world, letting loose the angry and exterminating passions of men against each other, and filling many a house with mourning, and lamentation, and woe. The fearful carnage of our own day still proclaims the ascendency of that grasping and insatiable ambition, that does not hesitate to wade through blood to its guilty object. This spirit assumes the cloak of Christianity the more securely to gather its spoils, while in every step it takes in its path of blood, it puts its profane and relentless foot upon the holy religion it professes to honour and defend. But in

proportion as the Gospel prevails, both civil and national war diminishes. A solemn sense of its evils is felt, and there is a growing unwillingness to engage in it, and plunge the world in its horrors. This dreadful scourge is no longer found within our sea-girt isle, where its sad scenes of fire and blood were long familiar. And had Russia been animated by the spirit of the Gospel, and not tried to plant its foot upon the neck of another, and evinced a selfish and unscrupulous policy, dangerous to truth, and liberty, and civilization, the sword would not have been unsheathed, and the hoarse voice of war would not have been resounding through the world. The Gospel breathes a spirit fatal to all the passions and elements that feed war. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare. Love is the fulfilling of the law," and will rather make alive than kill. Let men become meek and loving subjects of the Prince of Peace, and they will be on their guard against doing anything to disturb the peace of nations. When love reigns, bloodshed ceases. Love thinketh no evil, and it doeth no evil. When it reigns in the hearts, and presides over the counsels, of rulers and statesmen, it makes the life of man precious, and the welfare of man dear to all; and shapes measures so as to promote peace and good will. The more thorough and universal Christ's conquests, the less will men desire to make

conquests from each other. They will mourn over the griefs and sufferings of their fellow-heirs of mortality; and tremble at the idea of swelling the stream of human misery. They will use their power as a trust to do good, to be benefactors by binding mankind together in love; and will spare no pains to prevent scenes of strife and carnage. Once bound together as members of the household of faith, leaning on the same Saviour, washed in the same blood, loving the same Father, heirs of the same inheritance, and going to the same home, "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The still small voice of love shall succeed the startling trumpet-blast of war. Instead of frowning upon each other in bristling ranks from opposite heights, and mowing down one another by instruments of slaughter, they shall meet with interchanges of affection; their greetings will not be the rude greetings of shot and shell, but the gracious salutations of affection and friendship. They shall come together to consult and promote the common weal,—to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;" and no ghastly figures shall mark the spot of their Christian encounters; and bereaved widows and fatherless children shall not have to lament those meetings by the loss of their dearest friends.

"Peace hath her victories,
No less renowned than war."

If those victories are no less renowned than those of war, they are far more noble and enduring, and more rich in blessing to mankind. No blood-thirsty passions animate the counsels of peace. No blood tarnishes its laurels. Fire, and desolation, and broken hearts do not track its course. There will be no sure victory, a victory that shall awake no pangs and call forth no tears of regret, till Christ shall go forth conquering and to conquer, and subdue the world by love.

3. Intemperance.

This is one of the monster-evils of the day. It is a Moloch that rewards its devotees with sickness and death. Tens of thousands annually throw themselves as victims before the wheels of this devouring Juggernaut. Gaunt misery dogs its steps. It smites soul and body with a curse. It hamstrings industry, and destroys self-respect. It scares love and peace from families; and turns once happy homes into dens of crime, and want, and ferocity. It drives away everything good and lovely from the human heart. It never comes alone, but has a brood of sins, a long train of evils, at its back. It brings with it seven spirits more wicked than itself, and they go into a house and dwell there, and it ceases to be swept and garnished; and truth and

kindness and peace fly to seek a more congenial abode.

The Gospel is out and out opposed to intemperance of every form. It is hostile to all self-indulgence. It wages inexorable war against excess. It will listen to no truce with self-pleasing. It inculcates sobriety of mind and body, and subjects the whole man to the dominion of salutary control. Everything is to be brought into subjection to Christ. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The body is not to be pampered by excess either of meat or drink, or any other indulgence; but to be kept under by being temperate in all things. "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." We are commanded to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." We are not our own, but bought with a price; and we rob the Lord of His own property, if we take the vessel of the body and defile it with intoxication. The love of Christ is designed to master every other feeling, and be the governing principle of the heart, constraining us to "live not to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and who rose again."

No measures should be discouraged which tend to mitigate this devastating sin. Though the monster may not be slain, those men should be hailed as

benefactors who try to muzzle and chain it up. We may not see our way to go the whole length with them, and adopt precisely the same course; but it behoves us to wish them success in the great object at which they aim. It is a victory over the destroyer well worth battling for. At the same time, let it never be forgotten that the grand effectual remedy for this and every other moral evil is the application of the Gospel to the heart. Christ in the heart will bind the strong man and spoil his goods; and drive out his followers, whose name is Legion. He enables a man by His grace to part with a sin, though it should be as painful as the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye. He renders the weak strong, and makes him a conqueror of himself. "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." The victories of the cross transcend all others. Wonderful and glorious are the triumphs of the bleeding Lamb. They are numerous and beautiful as the dew-drops of the morning. "He that is in Christ is a new creature." Forthwith he becomes a cross-bearer, and curbs every unruly appetite and passion. He girds up his loins, and lives as a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. He casts down every idol, and reserves the throne within for the Lord. It is Christ that makes all things new.

4. Woman.

Though the Germans, even when living in their

pathless forests in a state of barbarism, treated woman with a respect and kindness unknown among other nations devoid of the light of the Gospel, yet Christianity has assigned her a place which she never before occupied. The Gospel lifts her from her degradation, and sets her in her true position in the family and in society. Much depends on household influence, and the stream of domestic efficacy can never run pure or smooth when woman is dishonoured and crushed. Retribution follows with appalling effect and unerring aim; and all the springs of social health are tainted. Morality withers, and the body politic decays. Corruption, like the plague of frogs in Egypt, enters the palace and the cottage, and all ranks suffer. Look at India under the debasing sway of Hindooism. There woman is treated as an inferior being by lordly man. She must walk behind him, to show her inferiority. It would be thought a crime for her to eat with him. Her mind is immured in ignorance, and she is but a slave. Look at China, where the birth of a female child is regarded as a humiliation and disgrace to the family. As she grows up she is treated by everybody, and especially by her brothers, as a menial from whom they have a right to demand the most painful and humiliating services. She is denied the enjoyments of childhood and youth. She learns neither to read nor write. She is declared to have no soul.

When married she is not allowed to take her meals with her husband, or even his male children. She must serve them at table, stand by in silence, help them to drink, and fill and light their pipes. She must eat alone, after they have done, and in a corner. Her food is coarse and scanty, and she would not dare to touch even what is left by her own sons. Nor is Mohammedanism more favourable to her rights. It treats her as a plaything, —a mere slave to the vanity and passions of man.

The Gospel steps in, and effects a great and salutary change. It raises woman from the dust, strikes off her fetters, wipes away her tears, and requires her to be treated with kindness and consideration. It educates and trains her for filling her legitimate place, with benefit to all who come within the sphere of her influence. As a wife, she is to be loved by her husband, even as Christ loved the Church; to be nourished and cherished as a man's own flesh; and to be honoured as the weaker vessel. As a mother, she is to be honoured and obeyed by her children. Whether considered as a mother or a daughter, a wife or a sister, a friend or a companion, a nurse or a comforter, the Gospel makes her the centre of a gentle and gracious influence, eminently conducive to the improvement and happiness of man. His rugged heart is tamed by her soft and affectionate sway; and genial dispositions and feelings spring up in

his breast under her hand. She moves among scenes of sorrow as an angel of light. Her radiant smiles of affection, and her silent tears of sympathy, and tender words of counsel, win many a young heart, and work like a spell on wayward spirits. To her gentle hands and unwearied care man is intrusted in infancy and childhood; and by her knee, with his little hands clasped in hers, he first learns to lisp his prayers to his Father in heaven. The Gospel employs her as the great family-educator, the plastic moulder of the character. She thus sheds a refining and humanizing influence upon her family; and is an honoured instrument in God's hand for discharging the functions of a mother in fashioning and training the affections and habits of her children. Many a son and daughter have reason to bless God for a Christian mother's influence and prayers. Her sweet image has been a softener of the heart, and a guardian of their steps, when far from her sight amid the temptations of the world. The mention of her name has melted them, when everything else failed to touch their sensibilities. Words, and truths, and scenes, and persons associated with her memory, have kindled in them a love for the Divine, when subtle and insinuating temptations were conspiring to deaden their spiritual life, and entangle them in sin. Accordingly, what a blank does such a mother's death create

in a family! How many husbands deprived of the heaven-drawing influence have their religious feelings blighted, and rapidly degenerate into a lower type of character! And what a sad change often comes over the motherless children! No longer enjoying the benefit of their tender monitor, friend, and companion, their affections are not warmed, their graces are not unfolded as before. Sorely do they miss her; and are strangers to little acts of endearment, and tokens of kindness, which once threw a cheerfulness and joy over their every-day life. From the want of her loving control they run wild, like neglected bushes, or unpruned trees. The refreshing dew of a Christian mother's love no longer revives their young hearts. They resemble a neglected garden-plot of flowers, when the hand that watered them is stiff and cold, and the eye that beamed with delight at their opening beauty is closed in death. Magnificent monuments have been reared to commemorate the names of illustrious warriors and statesmen; but some Christian mothers have in the retirement of their homes done more for mankind than many of those whom the world delights to honour. Society owes to them the moulding of noble sons and daughters, who have been ornaments of the Church, benefactors of the state, and a blessing to thousands who never heard their voice or saw their face.

The Gospel proclaims woman to be a partaker

with man of the grace of life. In the Evangelical History she stands in the fore-ground of the picture in all the beauty of warm and self-denying love, honoured by Jesus with marks of gracious confidence and tenderness; and favoured with His presence after His resurrection, before He had appeared to one of His disciples. His favourite family at Bethany, to which He used to repair for rest and fellowship after encountering the toils and opposition of Jerusalem, contained two sisters and one brother. He found sympathy and kindness in that loving circle, when Pharisaic faces were scowling at the very mention of His name, and blood-thirsty conspirators were plotting against His life. And though His female followers were less ready with their professions of fidelity even unto death than His chosen disciples, yet banishing all womanly fears and superstitious delusions, strong in the courage which ardent love inspires, they repaired to the sepulchre while it was yet dark, before Peter or John had stepped forth on the morning of the resurrection. Well may woman love the Gospel, and the Saviour whom it proclaims; for it has befriended her amid neglect and oppression; raised up devoted advocates to plead her cause and vindicate her rights; and made her the centre of improvement and happiness, to purify the blood of the community, and diffuse a softening light and grace over the surface

of society. Woman has a great mission, and it is Christianity that opens the field, and puts her in the way to fulfil it.

VI. Christianity is favourable to the Increase of all true knowledge and liberty, to all social and religious Progress.

The Gospel not only lays the axe to the root of enormous evils, but it also plants and cherishes whatever is friendly to man's progress in every part of the globe. It builds up the good, as well as pulls down the bad. It cultivates the soil, and sows the good seed, as well as clears away the jungle. Christianity is the pioneer of improvement, wherever it obtains a footing. Countless blessings follow in its train. It civilizes the savage, weans him from his blood-stained ferocities, and renders him gentle, forgiving, kind, industrious, and obedient. Look, accordingly, at those parts of the globe, where the Gospel is most firmly believed, and most consistently practised, and see how superior they are, in all the elements of a healthy civilization, to those regions from which it is excluded. They repose, like Goshen, in a warm, sunny light, while Egyptian darkness envelops all around them.

Archbishop Whately shows that till a people reaches a certain point in improvement, they cannot advance by virtue of any influence from within;

but the renovating power must come from without. They remain stationary, or rather go back; for they cannot rise, unless a helping hand be stretched out to them. New elements must be infused; for the materials they possess want life and the power of expansion. Like the dry rods that were put in with Aaron's, they neither bud nor bear fruit. Now, the most potent influence of all for infusing new life into a degraded and retrograding people, and for raising them in the scale of improvement, is the Gospel. It elevates the most sunken, and civilizes the most barbarous; opening up new springs of enjoyment, and applying fresh incentives to self-control, and to personal and social progress. It leavens the corrupt mass, and makes it a new lump.

Civilization does not precede and introduce Christianity; but Christianity ushers in civilization, and fosters all its elements. No doubt, enlightenment is favourable to those habits of thought which prepare man for examining the evidence, and in some measure testing the claims, of the Gospel. In the early days of Christianity, accordingly, it sought the principal seats and centres of Greek and Roman culture, and used them as cradles for its infant churches. It is not less true, however, that the Gospel has not to wait to sow its seed, and reap its harvest, till civilization has prepared the way for its entrance; for wherever Christianity has a home, civilization has a nurse

and a patron. Under a withering influence the good droops, and the bad flourishes, so that in regard to many a spot it may be said in a melancholy tone,

"Near yonder copse, where once a garden smiled."

But Christianity makes gardens smile where the wilderness howled, and renders the bitter waters sweet. The Gospel, in this as well as in other respects, is truly a bringer of good tidings.

"The first bringer of unwelcome news
Hath but a losing office; and his tongue
Sounds ever after as a sullen bell,
Remember'd knolling a departing friend."

Christianity has a more delightful office, and deserves a cordial welcome from all. It comes as the messenger of peace, with love in its heart, a smile on its face, a blessing on its lips, and immortal fruit in its hand, plucked from the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

1. Knowledge.

While Popery and other false systems dread the light, because it would shake their authority, and tempt men to break their iron yokes from off their necks, the Christianity of the Bible frowns on no branch of knowledge, but extends to it a friendly hand. A healthy literature, and true science, are the handmaids of the Gospel, when rightly used. The book of nature is written by the same hand

with the book of grace, and we must study both if we would understand God's wonderful works and ways. Those persons misunderstand the spirit and design of Christianity, and do violence to its genius, who would divorce it from literature and science, and exclude it from any sphere of mental activity. It was never designed to be shut up like a monk in a cell; but, like Christ Himself, was sent to walk forth among the children of men with enlightened and large-hearted sympathy, traversing the whole circle of humanity, and coming in friendly contact with mind, and heart, and life, at every point. Nothing that pertains to man is foreign to it. It is adapted to man in all the amplitude and variety of his powers; and it embraces the whole range of thought, feeling, and action. It consecrates all life by leavening all life. It has a baptism for everything; and makes common things holy unto the Lord. To sever it from education, is to cut the trunk of the tree from its root. It demands the domain usurped both by secularism and socialism, that it may infuse a healing virtue into the elements with which they deal, and render them conducive to man's good. The Gospel claims all the pipes of God's making, that it may cause the pure water of life to flow through them. It seeks to penetrate to every channel, that it may sweeten everything with the Divine blessing. There is nothing purely or exclusively secu-

lar in its eyes. It makes all sacred. It would impregnate everything, and fill everything with the fulness of God. It should be kept out of no school of education, no branch of learning. It is the precious ointment upon the priestly Head of the Church, that runs down to the skirts of the garments, even to the very feet of the political, and social, and educational system. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, '*Holiness unto the Lord*,' and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." Zechariah xiv. 20.

The diffusion of the Gospel everywhere promotes thoughtfulness, and calls the dormant powers of the mind into action. The conscience is stirred, and reflection is stimulated. Men are commanded to search the Scriptures, and they cannot examine their pregnant pages, and master their heavenly lessons, without receiving cultivation of mind, and having the thirst for knowledge in some degree awakened. Accordingly, knowledge has spread wherever Christianity has been planted and taken root. The Reformation, though preceded by the revival of learning, gave a mighty impulse to the human mind, and carried education down to the lower strata of society. The revival of learning was confined to the upper ranks and the middle classes of society; and many of those who pored over the Greek and Latin classics, and luxuriated

in their beauties, never troubled themselves about the mental wants of toiling artisans. The ignorance of others never cost them a thought, nor awakened a pang. They regaled themselves with their luxuries, and left those in ignorance who were perishing for lack of knowledge. Not so felt and thought the men whose hearts were touched by the love of God in the Gospel. They laboured earnestly to carry light into dark minds, and turn night into day. The Church and school went hand in hand. The one rose under the shadow of the other, and was nourished as its dearest offspring. Such was the noble spirit evinced by John Knox in Scotland; whose memory has been held in reverence by his grateful country not only for his heroic efforts in demolishing Popery, and planting the pure Gospel in the land, but also as the foremost benefactor of his nation, by his benevolent zeal and success in providing education in every parish for the poor and the needy of the land. And in our own day, the men who have done and spent most for the education of the people are men who have enlisted as soldiers under the banner of Christ. Their desire is to instruct all, and elevate all. They wish every man to have a Bible, and be able to read and understand that best of books. They would have good laws for all classes, and they would teach them all to read the laws under which they live. Were their sublime aim accomplished, and were the salutary

influence of a Christian education to pervade all the strata of society; new sources of strength and prosperity would be opened to the state; the Church of Christ would have some of the most formidable obstacles to her progress taken out of the way; and would win new triumphs of love and mercy. Expansion of mind would be accompanied by enlargement and sanctification of heart; and knowledge, purged of its deleterious ingredients, would communicate a healthy and elastic energy to every part of the social body.

2. Science.

Some short-sighted and narrow-minded professors of Christ have looked with a jealous eye, and a malignant frown, upon the progress and discoveries of science. Popery tried to stifle and extinguish the astronomical discoveries of Galileo; and consigned to a dungeon the man whom kings and priests should have delighted to honour: and in our own times an ignorant jealousy for the honour of the Bible has tempted some Protestants to denounce Geology, and has blinded them to the force and variety of evidence which no candid mind can resist. By setting an example of trifling with clear and concurrent evidence, and of endeavouring to twist and explain away facts which are too stubborn to be disposed of, they raise a prejudice in many minds against the Gospel which they profess; and encourage others to treat the evidence

of Christianity as unfairly as they do the evidence of science. But the Gospel should not bear the burden of their prejudice and folly; for it teaches them a different lesson, and they do not act under its sanction. Nor is the influence of Christianity to be thwarted by their puny efforts. Some of those who stand in the front ranks of the explorers of this young but growing science, take their places among the most enlightened, eloquent, and courageous advocates of the Bible. They hail it as a friend, and do not dread it as a foe, to Christianity. By tracing the footsteps of God in the mysterious past, and reading the pictorial history written in the rocks, they exhume the remains of buried generations of animal life, and unfold the wonderful works of God millions of years ago. They unite the distant past to the present by revealing the same God as the centre and upholder of both; and they strengthen our faith by disclosing the inexhaustible resources of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. They show us that creation is no fond dream of religious visionaries, but a sublime reality, which has been repeated again and again in new forms, in the early history of the world. They open up new views of the dignity of man, and his high place in the scale of existence, by exhibiting the long and beautiful preparation of the earth,—storing it with minerals and fuel,—and making it write its own

history for his intelligent and devout study, before he was brought upon the stage as the crowning work of God, in a world destined to be the theatre of transcendent events. The vast and marvellous book, written in letters of vegetable and animal structure, which Geology opens, is not a rival, far less an enemy, of the Bible; but a faithful auxiliary and friend, that echoes some of its noblest lessons, and proclaims the same God. Properly viewed, Geology is a servant, that holds up a lamp in its hand, to throw new light on some of the pages of Scripture, and draw our thoughts in adoring confidence to Him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

True science examines and unfolds the laws and works of God in the domain of nature; and nothing but ignorance and narrow-mindedness can discountenance its study, and deny and denounce its discoveries. All the works of God praise Him; and the more they are understood, the more rich and thrilling will be felt their ceaseless song of praise. It would be an argument against the divinity and inspiration of the Bible, if it laid science under its ban; and those who oppose its march, and disparage its triumphs, are playing into the hands of the enemies of the truth, and damaging the cause they wish to promote. All science is transmuted into religion when God's hand is seen in it, and adoring faith reverently

lays it upon His altar. If it dispels pleasing delusions, and breaks the spell of superstition, it introduces us to far greater wonders than any it causes to vanish away. The words of Campbell do not embody truth, when he says,

> "When science from Creation's face
> Enchantment's veil withdraws,
> What lovely visions yield their place
> To cold material laws!"

None of God's laws are cold, when viewed in the light of His Fatherly love; and the works and scenes to which they lead are more glorious than any poetry. The laws and facts of science are far more strange than fiction. Knowledge, and not ignorance, is the mother of true devotion. Truth far transcends fable; and the visions it unfolds are not only more real, but more lovely and enchanting, than any which fancy can paint; and they furnish far richer materials for mental discipline, human improvement, and profound and grateful adoration.

3. Literature.

The great light, which God has hung in the heavens to rule the day, is admirably adapted to benefit the earth on which it shines. Life is quickened and unfolded by the radiant stream of influence which daily flows from this gorgeous luminary, in the thousand forms that animate the air, and garnish the earth; from the modest flower

that seems to look timidly at us from its canopy of weeds by the road-side, to the lofty cedar and the giant oak,—from the tiny insect that gambols joyfully in the sun-beams, to the deer that outstrips the winds in fleetness, and the eagle that loves to soar above the clouds far from the haunts of man.

God has also hung a great light in the heavens of mind. He has given us the Bible, to be "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path." Now, as the sun is so beneficial to health and life, and develops so many forms of power and beauty, may it not be expected that the sun of Divine revelation shall equally conduce, in the higher sphere to which it belongs, to nourish and mature the powers of man's mental, moral, and spiritual nature? Since this is a gift from the hand of God, it must be suited to the necessities of our nature, fitted to stimulate our slumbering faculties and give a healthy exercise to our affections. Since this Divine Book touches all the springs of human nature, it cannot but vitalize thought and feeling, and breathe a new life into literature, infusing into it something of the richness of its own spirit, and arraying it in its own beauty. "Books," says Milton, "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and

extraction of that living intellect that bred them. A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." If this be true of the mental offspring of uninspired genius, much more so is it of that incomparable production,—the Word of God, which bears the stamp and flows from the affluence, and wisdom, and love, of the Divine Mind.

Though the Bible rests its claims to our faith and reverence on higher grounds than literary excellence and beauty, yet is it singularly distinguished by those qualities which win the admiration of genuine taste and feeling. It is a collection of the most sublime specimens of sacred literature the world ever saw,—rich in grandeur, beauty, and tenderness. In Biography, what can rival its exquisite pictures of personal character and domestic life, given with such inimitable simplicity, such touches of quiet pathos? What narratives can be put in the balance with the unadorned records of the Life of Jesus in the Gospels, where the grandeur of the character is preserved amid the artlessness of nature, and the unstudied scenes of social intercourse? In Poetry, how awful and thrilling are the majestic strains of Job! how rich and seraphic the bursts of Isaiah! how tender and soul-stirring the Songs of David! In Parables, what can vie with the pregnant and beautiful

teaching of Christ, where the pictures are so simple and life-like, yet as profoundly instructive as they are fresh and memorable! In Argumentation, how cogent and convincing is the reasoning of Paul,—lighted up with flashes from a heart of love,—graced and relieved by glowing bursts of ardent feeling and lofty aspiration! The finest gems lie scattered by an artless hand over the pages of the Sacred Book. The stream of thought assumes the loveliest forms. In the same temple where the piety of the devout worshipper is fed refined taste is regaled and elevated. As the fire burns upon the altar, the angel of the Lord, at once beautiful and holy, ascends in the flame.

But not only is the Bible a storehouse of literary wealth and beauty, but also a powerful stimulant of the faculties and affections, which lay the surest foundation for a healthy and varied literature. Wherever the Book of books is read and loved, and the influence of its religion inhaled, there thought is nourished, and the heart quickened. The dormant energies awake to life. A breath goes forth, that causes the dry bones to live and move. The mental fetters fall off; the icy bonds are dissolved; "the winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." The Bible sets in motion an influence which, working in upon reflective minds, changes the current and colour of

human thought; and stamps upon monuments of learning the imagery and language of inspiration. After the age of the Apostles we trace its influence flowing like rivulets over the wilderness of the Pagan world, producing unlooked-for fertility in its course. New ideas spring up, new imagery is introduced; a new tone of thinking begins to prevail; and as the Divine leaven spreads, literature takes the tone and reflects the hues of the celestial power, which is fermenting in the heart of society, and casting everything in a new mould.

The Bible is not the enemy of a sound literature; on the contrary, it fosters and develops it as a beneficent instrument for adorning and blessing mankind; and when literature is true to its mission, and imbued with a Christian spirit, its contributions to pure religion are signally valuable, and the benefits it confers on mankind are great and lasting. Such literature is a moon that reflects the light of the Sun of righteousness. They flow from the same creative mind; and instead of the one reigning by the extinction of the other, they are children of the same Father, and should live together in peace, and unite in executing the will of their Parent. The brilliant colours of the rainbow are not rivals of each other, but, suspended in the arch of promise, they reveal their distinctive splendour in loving harmony, and united they form the purest light. So there is no inherent

contrariety between the Bible and books of pure literature. The higher fosters the lower, and nurses it as a mother does her child. The Word of God addresses the imagination and reason, as well as the heart and conscience; and brings into play all the elements which go to form a literature nervous, racy, refined, and elevating.

In the glorious era of the Reformation we see the prolific virtue of the Bible impregnating and quickening literary productions. Europe awoke as from a dream. The mind, lying dormant as a chrysalis, burst its bonds, and spreading its wings, took its flight into the welcome region of light and truth. The earnestness inspired by the Gospel urged many to write and publish their thoughts, whom no classical influence could have prevailed upon to take up their pen. Many ceased to repair to Pagan altars to light their lamps; for they felt their hearts burning within them with the holy fire that came down from heaven. The mind was stirred to its profoundest depths; and a new literature sprung into being,—vigorous from its birth, strong and fruitful even in its childhood, the benefit of which we are enjoying even at the present day.

British literature owes much to the Bible. The English translation of the Scriptures has exerted a most beneficial influence upon our language, by accustoming the ear to its simple and venerable

expressions; and by rendering the matchless imagery of the Bible familiar to every educated mind. It has interwoven the richness of tropical vegetation with the less luxuriant forms of European life; and given an Oriental cast to the less ornate and more practical character of the Saxon mind. It has imparted a solemn majesty to many of our writings,—infused into much of our oratory an Eastern fervour and opulence,—and graced with a stately rhetoric the pages of our authors. Its veins of gold run through the current thoughts and expressions of every-day life. It has woven its Divine threads into the warp and woof of British thought, and made it shine with a peculiar lustre. Its borrowed beauties embellish the fairest pages of our authorship. Even those who affect to despise it, and write against it, steal its flowers, and put on its coat of many colours. Friends and foes have decked themselves in its plumes. Even the wayward genius of Byron kindled over its glowing and majestic pages. The Bible was one of the books ever found on his study-table; and the sublimities of Job flashed light into his passionate and poetical mind.

Upon many of the stars of our literature the influence of the Bible has been still more potent and direct. Behold its noble monuments in the rich and varied productions of the worthies of the Church of England. But that reviving efficacy,

that productive energy, is not shut up in a corner, —is not confined within the pale of any particular Church. Its power fell upon Milton like the prophet's mantle, and purged his inward eye, and filled his soul with sublime visions, when hard toil in his country's service had enveloped him in the darkness of perpetual night. It awoke and fed the genius of Bunyan, that gifted and

> "Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
> Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail."

While admiring both his genius and his piety, Cowper said of him,

> "I name thee not, lest so despised a name
> Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame."

That name moves no sneer now. Britain is proud of the tinker. He is one of the brightest jewels of her literary crown. His Pilgrim's Progress and Holy War place him as high as an allegorist as Homer stands as a poet. The wits who despised him are forgotten; and the bigots who persecuted him are consigned to infamy; while his kingly and saintly spirit feasts the imagination, and warms and sustains the piety, of admiring thousands. It was its vernal influence which clothed Cowper's sad mind with flowers of beauty, when deep melancholy, like a stream of burning lava, had laid its glory waste. This was the hand that struck the lyre of James Montgomery, and made his heart young and fresh even in old age. It was a spark

from this fire that kindled the flame which burned so brightly in Pollok, and illuminated our northern sky with a glory that filled all eyes with wonder;—a light, alas! too soon to disappear; for his sun went down while it was yet day. It was under the magic spell of the Bible that the chaste genius of Robert Hall, the original and deep mine-working Foster, and the sturdy and prolific mind of Chalmers drew forth their mental treasures, and, like the Wise Men of the East, laid them at the feet of Jesus. Thus, as you behold the image of the sun in a calm lake, or broken in the dancing waters of an agitated pool, so do you see the image of the Bible reflected by different minds in the walks of literature, in some more, in others less, perfect; but all pointing to the sky overhead, where the orb of light shines. There is a genial breadth in its influence, favourable to the culture and development of all orders of minds. It has given point to argument, fervour to eloquence, majesty and beauty to painting, sublimity to the conceptions of architecture, as well as set the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling. It lays nothing true, or beautiful, or good, under its ban; but takes everything noble by the hand, and bids it walk forth in the clear and warm light of heaven. It is the angel that troubles the pool, and imparts to the water a healing virtue.

4. Liberty.

The religion of the Bible imparts a knowledge of liberty, and also kindles the love of it in the hearts of men. By awakening a profound sense of accountability to God; by teaching that all men are equal as sinners and immortals before God; and that power has its duties as well as its rights, for to whomsoever much is given of them much shall be required; and that all ranks of believers are one in Christ Jesus,—the Word of God creates new ideas, and inoculates mankind with a new spirit. While throwing themselves in a spirit of self-abasement at the feet of God, and acknowledging that they are unworthy of the least of His mercies; and while learning to have a sacred respect for what is due to others, they feel that they too have rights, which no man may lawfully take from them. They know that they were not made to be footstools for wealth or despotic power; and that instead of being machines to be driven at the will of others, religious liberty is their birthright; and it is sacrilege to come in between God and their conscience. A love of liberty thus springs up under the influence of Christianity; and is one of the blessings it confers on mankind. This is part of the excellent fruit that grows on the Gospel-tree. The man who believes that he is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ is conscious of feelings and aspirations that impart dignity to his character, and give

him a notion of the worth and nobility of the nature he wears, and which is exalted and crowned at the right hand of God in the glorified person of Christ Jesus.

We find, accordingly, liberty most flourishing where Christianity is most triumphant. How much of its liberty Scotland owes to the Gospel every intelligent reader of history knows. John Knox breathed a spirit into the country in his day which did more to save it from a grinding despotism than all other instruments besides. It was not its nobles nor its soldiers that threw the shield of protection over it in a dark and perilous day of trouble; but the men whom Christ had made free. They were the bulwarks of freedom, against which the angry surges of intolerant and persecuting power dashed in their blind fury. Nor would England ever have attained the dignity and eminence she has reached, without the guiding and protecting power of Christianity. She would have been groaning in bondage and afraid to make her sighs for liberty be heard, had the religion of Jesus not befriended her. Many of the brave men who sealed their testimony for Christ with their blood, awoke a spirit in others that struggled heroically for her advancement, after their teachers were sleeping in the dust. And wherever the Gospel is planted in our own day, though its teachers scrupulously abstain from political subjects, the seeds

of liberty are sown. This is the case in Turkey, where every Protestant Church is a centre of enlightened ideas, and a nursery of rational freedom. And hence the hostility felt against the propagation of the pure Gospel in Austria and Russia, and other despotic countries. The truth is hated because it brings liberty in its train. Tyranny seems instinctively to know its great adversary, and hastens to exterminate or drive out the aggressor. Alarmed, it appears to say, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "Hast thou come to torment me before the time?" It knows that the Gospel and it cannot dwell in the same house, nor reign together in the same land; and like Herod, to save its tottering kingdom, it endeavours to slay the dreaded infant in the cradle.

Let it not be thought, however, that the servants of Christ are to promote their Master's cause by stepping beyond their legitimate sphere, and plunging into the whirlpool of politics. Many promising Churches have been blighted in this way. By indulging in a political spirit, attention has been withdrawn from the one thing needful and the salvation of souls,—tender hearts have been wounded, —and the Spirit of God grieved away. Love has languished; meekness and prayerfulness have declined; spirituality has drooped; and unseen and eternal things have been almost wholly lost sight of. They have forgotten their first love; and have not been watchful to strengthen the things that re-

main, and that are ready to die. Life departs; and they lose all moral weight; ceasing to be the light of the world, and the salt of the earth.

We must, nevertheless, be careful to avoid going to the opposite extreme. Since the Gospel is the nurse and guardian of civil and religious liberty, and paves the way for still greater progress in freedom by teaching conscientiousness and self-control,—we must bring the leaven into contact with the lump to be leavened. It is the duty of Christian men to show themselves true patriots, by bringing the spirit of Christianity to bear upon the laws and institutions of their country; that their tone and influence may be improved; and that they may prove conductors of increased blessings to mankind. Everything falls within the jurisdiction of Christ; and His religion is designed to impress its character upon political government and legislation, as well as on other matters. No nation can reach the highest pitch of its glory and prosperity, till the pure and gracious spirit of Christianity finds its way to the throne,—presides in the counsels of statesmen,—rules in the senate-house,—sits upon the bench,—and pervades our whole laws and institutions, as well as be in the ascendant in the Church of the living God. All the sheaves must make obeisance to His sheaf, for a greater than Joseph is here.

5. Christian Progress.

Progress is a law of the Divine Government in connexion with the history of man. The advancement is not steady and uniform. As during the flowing tide, some waves do not advance so high on the shore as the preceding ones, but larger ones again roll in, and sweep over the former mark; so those states of apparent ebb in the progress of mankind are followed by a higher flood of improvement, which flows over former boundaries, and reaches a higher point in knowledge and improvement. If Christianity did not meet this law, it would be defective. But it is in harmony with it and meets it most amply. The Bible is the very soul of progress; not only in regard to knowledge and social improvement, but also in regard to the progress and triumphs of the Church.

There is a remarkable analogy in the book of nature to the Word of God in this respect. What is necessary for the support and more immediate comfort of man lies near the surface, and is comparatively of easy access; while those things that may be styled luxuries, and which belong to an advanced stage of civilization, are more latent, and of more difficult approach. Materials are thus provided for the exercise of the human mind from generation to generation; and for supplying the new wants that arise in the progress of society. Nature is a vast and inexhaustible storehouse, for inviting the exercise of all orders of mind, accord-

ing to their respective gifts and tastes; so that none should be at a loss for something to do. There is room for all in the variety of the fields opened up. And there is no fear of the supply of materials running out, leaving the mind of man to rust, and giving him reason to fold his hands and say, "I have discovered all that can be discovered; I have mastered all the secrets of nature; I have finished the last chapter of the book of nature, and I have nothing more to read." The outward world is adapted to man, and man is adapted to the outward world; and our wise and gracious Maker has provided abundant food for his intellect; so that his curiosity shall be kept alive by the hope of novelty, and his mind be cultivated and disciplined by congenial employment, to the end of the world. Great as are the achievements of science and art, they are but in their infancy. New wonders are brought to light every day. The vista opens up a wider and more magnificent prospect at every step. There is no end to the treasures which God has hid in His field; that man may dig for them, and profit by the exercise.

The Bible is constructed on the same principle, and with the same wise and ample provisions. What is necessary for salvation lies on the surface of Divine Revelation, that the simple and unlearned may have the things that belong to their peace placed within their reach. But there are more

things in the Bible than what first meets the eye; and there is meat for the deepest craving of the human heart. The most simple-minded and unlettered Christian finds in it what he needs; and the most mature and spiritual believer meets with food convenient for him. Though no addition be made to the Bible, it expands and unfolds itself, as the Church advances in her glorious career, under the guidance and protection of her Divine Head. The discoveries of science expose the incorrectness of some venerated expositions of particular passages, and lead us to look at them in a new and more correct light, and to do more justice to the infallible and far-reaching lessons of the Spirit. Christianity, though essentially unchanged, presents new and more beautiful aspects, as the Church approaches nearer the Gospel-model; and is made to assume a new attitude, and to develop her latent powers, in the changes of Divine Providence. The inward eye is more thoroughly purged; and beauties are clearly seen, which were but dimly discerned before. The more fully the Bride breathes the Spirit and reflects the image of the Bridegroom, the more perfectly does she understand and sympathize with His mind, as revealed in His word. The deeper and wider the experience of the new heart, the more clear the insight into the meaning and compass, the length and breadth, the height and depth of the Word of

God. And as the Church is still far behind the Bible, and the Christianity in the souls of men is very defective compared with the pure and loving spirit of the Gospel, believers must reach a more holy and palmy condition before they can fathom the profound depths of the Holy Scriptures. "We see through a glass darkly, and know only in part;" and as the Church shall rise higher and higher, walking in the footsteps of her risen Lord, she will at every step see something in the Bible unobserved by preceding generations. The half hath not been told. The mine is not exhausted. The old book shall ever be found a new book to the humble inquirer, making the wisest wiser. There will be mysteries to excite reverence, difficulties to teach humility, and new discoveries to reward diligence, and feed the piety, and meet the new wants of man in the ripest state of the Church down to the last day. Man shall ever find that the Bible is above him.

Let not this view of the Bible be thought extravagant. This is one of its excellences as God's chosen instrument for educating man, and drawing him up in the scale of perfection. Many precious things may be neglected at our door, because we have not the eye to discern their properties and value. Mines of wealth may be hid under our feet, and generations may live and die in poverty without exploring them. So it is with the trea-

sures of the Bible. The well may be at hand, and we may be little better than Hagar with her dying child and empty bottle,—ready to perish, till the angel of the Lord points out the refreshing water. A precept, clear, concise, explicit, and peremptory, may be written on the very forehead of Revelation, and yet be as completely lost sight of as if it did not exist, owing to the eye being too exclusively fixed on other matters. Take, for example, the command of our Lord, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." How long was this precept read in the Church, in the family, and the closet, in this Protestant country, without one responsive chord in the heart being struck, or the corresponding obligation being felt, to make disciples of all nations! Protestant missions are but of yesterday; and our Lord's solemn and unconditional injunction is more than eighteen hundred years old. It is not wrapped up in obscurity; no language could be plainer than the terms employed; and yet Christ's voice spoke for many a long year, even to good men, in vain. A new spirit arises; the ear catches the sound; and Protestants wonder that they could be blind and deaf so long, taking no note of the sound of Christ knocking at the door of their hearts.

The Bible, by this beautiful characteristic of unfolding amplitude, is fitted for its great mission to lead on the Church to the end of the world,

like God in the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, when He led His people like a flock. It supplies a perfect external standard of truth and character for our guidance. It is not variable and fluctuating, like the inner light of the school of intuition, who take for their oracle their own feelings, which vary in different individuals, and leave man without the obligation of law or Gospel, and render him the sport of his own whims and delusive desires. Whereas in the Bible a perfect standard is found, which has a real and permanent existence; whether our feelings are languid, or vivid; whether the voice of conscience be clear, or indistinct. It is on before us, and far above us; and we shall never come up to the full height of its perfection. Like the telescope, which enables us to see countless stars in the pathless heavens, invisible to the naked eye, the Word of God so strengthens the spiritual vision, that new truths burst in dazzling glory on the mind. Text-books of science and philosophy, once admired for their accuracy and fulness, fall into disrepute, and are thrown aside; because they are outstripped by recent discoveries, and more profound and correct views; but the Bible is never thus outstripped and superseded by a more perfect revelation. Human systems are ever undergoing changes and repairs. The temple of knowledge receives additions from new hands. Some parts are pulled

down, as not coming up to the light and improved ideas of modern times. But the Bible stands unaltered, and keeps far ahead of all nations and all churches. The temple of the Gospel is complete. It is marred by no blemish, and needs no addition. It projects the light of its religion and morality into the future of all coming ages; anticipates all changes; provides for every emergency; lays down principles applicable to all times; adaptable, yet pure and unbending; and thus presents a model that shall need no patching and never become obsolete. It carries in its bosom a provision for all the future wants of man; for his fears and anguish, his conflicts and sorrows, his deepest yearnings and loftiest aspirations. As it takes man by the hand to guide him through the wilderness, it has help for him in the time of need; manna for him to eat; living water from the rock for him to drink; comfort to sweeten the bitter waters; an arm to defend him in danger; and hope to cheer him in the prospect of death. Every variety of character and temperament is provided for. There are commands for those most influenced by authority; warnings and threatenings to awe and restrain the thoughtless; arguments fitted to those who are most affected by reasoning; beautiful and gorgeous poetry for the lovers of imagination; parables and biography and pictures for the young; promises to soothe the old and infirm;

invitations to allure and encourage the timid; examples for those who are more effectually taught by practice than precept; and tender sympathy for bruised reeds; and a balm for wounded hearts.

On this subject Coleridge writes with singular truth, beauty, and eloquence.

"In every generation, and wherever the light of Revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in this volume a correspondent for every movement toward the better felt in their own hearts. The needy soul has found supply, the feeble a help, the sorrowful a comfort; yea, be the recipiency the least that can consist with moral life, there is an answering grace ready to enter. The Bible has been found a spiritual world,—spiritual, and yet at the same time outward and common to all. You in one place, I in another, all men somewhere or at some time, meet with an assurance that the hopes and fears, the thoughts and yearnings, that proceed from or tend to a right in us, are not dreams or fleeting singularities, no voices heard in sleep, or spectres which the eye suffers but not perceives. As if, on some dark night, a pilgrim suddenly beholding a bright star moving before him should stop in fear and perplexity. But lo! traveller after traveller passes by him, and each, being questioned whither he is going, makes answer, 'I am following yon guiding star!' The pilgrim

quickens his own steps, and presses onward in confidence.

"For more than a thousand years, the Bible, collectively taken, has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law,—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always supporting, and often leading the way. Its very presence, as a believed Book, has rendered the nations emphatically a chosen race, and this too in exact proportion as it is more or less generally known and studied. Of those nations which in the highest degree enjoy its influences it is not too much to affirm, that the differences, public and private, physical, moral, and intellectual, are only less than what might be expected from a diversity in species. Good and holy men, and the best and wisest of mankind, the kingly spirits of history, enthroned in the hearts of mighty nations, have borne witness to its influences, have declared it to be beyond compare the most perfect instrument, the only adequate organ, of humanity;—the organ and instrument of all the gifts, powers, and tendencies, by which the individual is privileged to rise above himself—to leave behind and lose his dividual phantom self, in order to find his true self in that distinctness where no division can be,—in the Eternal I AM, the ever-living Word, of whom all the elect, from the archangel before the throne to the poor wrestler with the Spirit *until the break-*

ing of day, are but the fainter and still fainter echoes."

This onward movement of the Church, carrying society along with her in some measure, under the guidance of her Divine Head, and in the light of the Bible, shows the folly, if not the sin, of attempting to chain her to any epoch of the past. There are, doubtless, many benefits to be derived from the study of the gifted writers of memorable eras of the Church in past times; and many salutary lessons may be learned from her attitude, spirit, and bearing at different periods; but while carrying away the spoils of antiquity, and enriching ourselves with the treasures of gold and silver and precious stones, let us beware of venerating as sacred relics the wood, hay, and stubble, which shall be burned up in the fiery trial. The living Church in her best days has never come up to the Scriptural model. The Bible has ever been far above her and far before her in fulness, compass, and spirituality. While influencing the times, she always, more or less, takes the colour of the times. New dangers cause her to appear in a new posture. New phases of error challenge her belligerent powers, and put her in a position of antagonism and warfare. She is tempted to employ controversial terms, which are framed to meet existing heresies, and repel the assaults of insidious and dreaded foes; and these, while they

give the truth a sharp edge, and present it in a firm and well-defined form,—necessarily render it one-sided. The doctrines handled have not the full-orbed look which they have in the Scriptures. They are rather sentinels on guard with their arms in their hand, as if listening to catch the faintest sound, and looking earnestly to detect the slightest movement, than friends meeting us with a smile, or nurses kindly bending over us and reviving our sick and languishing souls. Besides, there are temporary arrangements and measures suited to the particular occasion, but never meant to be perpetual, not having the stamp of Divine authority, and not being essential parts of the Church. To make any uninspired era, therefore, a perfect pattern, to be absolutely copied in all things, is to thwart the wise and gracious purpose of God, and do violence to the spirit of the Gospel.

We owe much to the Reformation, and cannot be too thankful to God for that glorious resurrection of truth and life of which we are reaping the fruit every day. But the Bible, and not the Reformation, is the standard of the Church. The Reformation had its excellences, but it had also its defects. The Reformation directs our eyes back to the past; but the Bible points forward, and invites us to look for greater things from the future than the world has yet seen. There is more in the Bible than the Church has got out of

it. Christ has greater perfection in store for her than she has yet reached; and more magnificent triumphs than have been achieved. He goes forth at her head conquering and to conquer; and let not unbelief set limits to His resources, or stagger at His promises. The swaddling-bands that suited the infant will not do for the vigorous youth, or the full-grown man. The past must not be used as a shell to compress and kill expanding life. The dress of the Reformation is too tight and too short for the growing Church. It is as impossible to chain the Church to the past as to stop the sun in his course, or arrest the flowing sea. If we have a historical Church, we have also a prophetical Church; and the latter is the more glorious of the two. Brighter and warmer tints light up and adorn the future of the Church, in the rich and glowing promises of God, than what we find in the finest pictures embalmed in history. To go back is impossible; let us not look back, lest we incur the curse of Lot's wife. Christ is leading us forward, and saying, Higher, higher still; let us follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth. A new roll is opened; another chapter is ready for us to read. The past cannot be resuscitated. Let the dead bury their dead. The old moulds and casts are too small. Better things are in store for us. The Prince of life is not exhausted. His Bride is not yet adorned with all [redacted]r ornaments; her full symmetry and beauty are

not developed. The King's Daughter will be glorious without as well as glorious within, when He shall raise her from the dust, wipe away her tears, and clothe her with the dazzling garments of salvation, and so make her shine with all the graces of the Spirit—"Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God." When what is spoken shall become living and actual, this glory shall be better known, and cause the lesser lights to pale their ineffectual fires.

Articles of Religion, Venerable Liturgies, Confessions of Faith, and Systems of Theology, have, by injudicious usage, been instrumental in retarding the progress of the Church, and turning away her eye too much from the lively Oracles of God. The Bible is the religion of Protestants, the great pillar of the truth, the bulwark of the Church; and human compositions, however excellent and venerated, should be viewed with jealousy, and kept in their own place, when they are found to intercept the direct and healing influence of the Word of God. This is the mirror in which we must look, if we would with open face behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Confessions of Faith and Articles of Religion are salutary safeguards against error, and have gradually grown up from an early period to meet

the exigencies of the Church. They form a test of a man's faith, when he seeks to screen himself from the detection of heterodoxy by a general profession of adherence to the Holy Scriptures. By presenting a lucid summary of Divine truth, they supply a touchstone to our faith, and enable others to ascertain what we believe, and what we do not believe. In this way they have served an important purpose in the progress of the Gospel, by acting as a guard against plausible error, when it employs Scriptural language to undermine the very truth which that language was designed to teach. It is desirable, however, to avoid including in such summaries those numerous and minute points, which are rather inferences from the doctrines of the Bible than part of the doctrines themselves; and which from their multiplicity and subtlety are calculated to keep those asunder who hold the Head; and who might otherwise stand side by side in the same fold, and present their visible as well as essential unity as a living testimony to the world.

Such productions, however, should not be raised to such dignity as to render them rivals of the Word of God. The Head of the Church may, under the guidance of His Providence, and by the copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, produce such a ripe state of faith and spiritual-mindedness in the hearts of His people, as shall leave all past uninspired periods of Christianity far behind, and

require all subordinate standards to be subjected to a careful revision, that they may in all points be brought into more perfect accordance with the Scriptures as interpreted by the clearer light and more abundant love and holiness vouchsafed by the Spirit of God.

The Bible, and not human compilations of the doctrines of the Bible in a systematic form, is God's chosen instrument for educating and perfecting the Church, and leavening society. It has qualities and excellences for this purpose, possessed by no uninspired production. In Confessions of Faith, and similar documents, the truth of God is arranged in systematic order and expressed in the language of man. One doctrine is made to fit into or flow from another, and form together one compact and harmonious whole. Such a mode of presenting the truth, though useful in its place, is addressed only to one class of minds,—to persons of a systematic type of intellect. Accordingly, were the influence of this style of teaching made so exclusive and potent as to stamp its impression upon the character, it would lead to a monotony in the tone of mind, to a stiff uniformity in the style of thought, as if all its disciples were struck with the same die, and cast in the same mould. This effect would make the Church stand still, and deprive her of legitimate influence over society.

God's way of unfolding Divine truth is the best.

He knows what is in man, and what should be put in him; and He selects the mode of conveying it which is best adapted to his nature. In the Scriptures Christianity is interwoven with human wants and sympathies, with joy and sorrow, with every-day accidents, with character and life. It is clothed with flesh and blood,—blooming and life-like,—artless yet wise. The connexion of the truth with the persons and events and places with which it is associated is appointed by infallible wisdom, and is designed to convey something good to the devout and believing heart. The very dress and imagery of the Bible has a noble use; and we are not at liberty to strip the truth bare, and make light of the drapery in which the hand of God has attired it. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. If we moor the Church to what is human, she will resemble hulks anchored in the middle of a river, to which Dugald Stewart compares benighted and bigoted universities, that lag behind their age, which, by remaining stationary, show only the rapidity of the current. The Bible, by the simplicity, affluence, and variety of its teaching, does not stereotype the mind, but sanctifies and expands it. It does not render the character rigid, but elastic; and leads it onward. The Church of the living God is not an ill-made, crazy ship, lying still while clippers and steamers are gliding by; but God made her of a heavenly model that she might sail

a-head of all,—cresting the billows with a triumphant air,—the light of heaven on her sails,—wafted along by the breath of the Spirit,—steered by the compass of truth,—and piloted by Christ, who is no longer asleep in the stern.

One of the beautiful results of the Bible mode of presenting the truth is, the individuality of character it produces in those whom it fashions and trains. There is no tame uniformity, no rigid sameness. As in the case of Peter and Paul, and John and James, the original type of character is preserved as the groundwork of the spiritual superstructure. The latent energies are all brought out. The personal peculiarities are sanctified and developed. No two Bible-taught Christians are alike, though essentially the same. They are distinguished by a remarkable freshness and simplicity. Their hearts, as well as their heads, are cultivated. They have been touched at every point by the enveloping influence of the Word of God. Every faculty has been appealed to. Every chord of the heart has been struck. Though they are not artificially trained, they do not run wild, but expand in healthy freedom and variety, under the fostering power of the Bible, and the quickening breath of the Spirit.

To promote the progress of Christianity, accordingly, we must aim at bringing the whole counsel of God to bear upon the heart, pure and undiluted,

as presented by God Himself in the revelation of His Word. "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth," was one of our Lord's petitions, when pleading for His disciples; and it is by bringing the hearts of men in direct contact with the Word that the sanctifying process is still to be carried on. When Christ sits as a Refiner of silver, not only does He use fire to melt the heart and remove the dross, but He also employs the Word as an instrument to engrave His own bright and lovely image on the soul. We should encourage, therefore, a free and unshackled interpretation of the Bible, and bring forth what God has put there for the salvation of sinners and the progress of Christianity; whether we can reconcile it with venerated systems of theological opinion, or not. It is a rich mine, and it behoves us to extract the precious ore for the good of man. Systems of human opinion must conform to the Bible; the Bible must not be mutilated and subjected to torture, to make it admit a forced interpretation, that it may square with them. The whole truth must be sought, and the whole truth proclaimed, happen what may. No Church can stand or prosper by holding back a truth, or keeping it in the background. God will make that buried truth a hammer to break her in pieces. The hour of retribution will come; and the treacherous, unfaithful steward shall meet his reward. To the law and

the testimony must the appeal be made. Whatever cannot pass through this ordeal will be cast into the fire and burned. And this holds good in relation also to what is emblazoned in a creed, but trampled upon in practice. The truth should be proclaimed and acted upon. The lamp must not be hid, but brought forth, that it may give light to all that are in the house. All that the Lord hath spoken we must believe, and say, and do; not forgetting that we are commanded to cherish love, as well as believe the truth; and that it is faith working by love that is to enlarge the sphere of Gospel influence and conquer the world.

VII. Christ is invested with Universal Supremacy, and all orders of creatures must bow to Him.

The exaltation of Christ, in connexion with the power and dominion annexed to it, is spoken of in the most unqualified and absolute terms. The language of Paul, in Philippians ii. 10, 11, does not admit of the slightest limitation: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Nothing but a forced and an unnatural interpretation of these words can restrict their application to the living and the dead of the

family of man. "Things in heaven" include angels as well as the spirits of departed saints; "things in earth" comprehend all the inhabitants of the world, good and bad; and "things under the earth" denote all the fallen and apostate spirits, whom "God cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jesus is exalted, not only as a Prince and a Saviour, but also as universal Lord, to exercise dominion over all orders of created being. Not only is He the Head of the redeemed, but He is possessed of authority over ungodly men and devils. To Him at last every knee shall bow. This will not take place in the case of the impenitent by a universal salvation, discharging all men from suffering the penalty of sin, and restoring them to the favour of the Lord. No! This is a fond dream,—a wish springing up in hearts that would be wiser than God, and will not sit as little children at His feet to learn His will, and say Amen, to it. Those who will not bow of their own accord shall be forced to bow. They must come down. "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Homage and obeisance shall be exacted from them. Nor shall the rebel angels escape. Even now the devils believe and tremble. There is hatred in hell, but no unbelief. They have the witness in themselves of God's will and power to punish them. On

earth the demons knew and acknowledged Christ, when the Jews disowned him. "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Mark i. 24. "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matt. viii. 29. They could not stand before His authority. They even besought Him to grant their request, addressing him as suppliants. "The devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." Their proud leader, with his rebel host, shall bow the knee, and confess the Sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Similar is the import of the language of Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians. "God set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put *all* things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over *all* things to the Church." Ephes. i. 20—22. This enumeration of particulars excludes the very idea of limitation. No order of creatures, however high their titles or exalted their nature, is exempted from subjection to the power of Jesus as Lord of all. All principalities and powers must cast their crowns at His feet. He is over all things. He reigns supreme; enthroned in universal dominion, and crowned with honour

and glory. No creature stands near Him as a rival or equal; and there is none excepted from subjection to His sovereignty. Every part of the universe shall feel His sway. The proudest shall be humbled, the most powerful subdued, the most exalted brought down, and universal homage be offered to Him who hung on the cross, but now sits on His throne; into whose hand a reed was put in mockery, but that hand now sways the sceptre of unlimited power.

In the same strain is what our Lord says of Himself, "I have the keys of hell and of death." Revelation i. 18. The key was the symbol of authority. Hence Isaiah describes the Messiah as having the "government upon His shoulder," because a large key was borne on the shoulder as a sign and badge of official power and dignity. Now, as Lord, Jesus has the keys of Hades—the invisible world, and of death. "He openeth and none can shut; He shutteth and none can open." He exercises absolute power over the two great divisions of the invisible world, the region of the blessed and the region of the miserable. Even death, the king of terrors, is subject to Him. He cannot smite the weakest mortal, till Jesus gives him leave.

Such being the exaltation and universal supremacy of Christ, we see a fitness in the diffusion of His religion, and the exercise of His Kingly power over all mankind. It is to wrong Christ to desire

to exclude Him from any part of the world, or to treat the Gospel as if it should not spread over every region. Universality is stamped upon it as the religion of Him who employs it as His chosen instrument to bless mankind. It is the channel of His truth and grace. Wheresoever we would have Him to reign, there we should wish to see it flourish. He has not one religion for one nation and another for another nation, but the same for all,—suited to all, and the expression of His gracious and benignant will, wherever He erects His throne. The Gospel is the chain of love for drawing sinners into their place, that they may stand in the right relation to the great Centre of light and life and holiness, who will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."

This sublime doctrine of Christ's universal sovereignty is replete with encouragement and comfort to believers. When mysterious providences perplex them, and cross events fill them with distress, and wound their hearts in their most tender points, when adverse powers rise up, which seem to threaten truth and love with extinction, they can lay hold of the doctrine that the Lord liveth and the Lord reigneth, and take courage. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." He whom the winds and the waves obeyed is with them in the storm. "We know that all things work toge-

ther for good to them that love God." Sometimes horses will not draw together; they plunge and go backward, instead of running in harmony. But the Lord will curb and rein and direct the most unruly and opposite elements, and cause them to unite and coöperate for the good of His people and work. He yokes them together to draw His chariot, and "goes forth conquering and to conquer." Though in conflict with each other, He makes them coöperate for a common end. They run in harness, and the reins are in His hand, even in their wildest freaks.

II. Christianity is designed to be Universal.

I have already considered the fitness of the Gospel to be the religion of the whole world. Christ, though a Jew, was not a Jew in spirit. His character was unique, formed as it was in the midst of Jewish elements, and yet free from every taint of narrowness and bigotry. His heart embraced the world; He came as the desire of all nations; and His religion carries the seeds of salvation to be sown in the hearts of all nations. Christianity is both fitted to be universal and designed by God to be universal.

1. We are commanded to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye

therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matthew xxviii. 19. The Gospel is suited to all, and it is to be offered to all. The commission to proclaim the Gospel knows no limits but the world itself. The Sun of righteousness is designed to shine upon every land. Ancient Philosophy, as already stated, had its popular doctrines for the ignorant, and its secret doctrines for the initiated and learned. It was thought degrading to truth to put it within the reach of the vulgar. A nobler and more generous doctrine issued from the lips of Jesus. In reply to the message of John the Baptist from the dungeon, after enumerating various miracles as proofs of His Messiahship, He added, "and to the poor is the Gospel preached." If other evidence fail to convince you, let this be pondered and have its due weight. Is not this God-like? Is it not in keeping with the character of Him who is not a respecter of persons? Here is a new thing in the world, that the door of mercy is thrown open to all, and the pearl of great price is offered to the poorest of the earth. The wisdom of God is revealed to babes. It is meant for all nations, and for all classes, that all may be taught of God and know Him, from the least even to the greatest. Behold the gracious purpose of God depicted in the magnificent scene of Apocalyptic vision,—"I saw another angel fly

in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation xiv. 6. That message of life arrests the attention of the heavenly hosts, and they delight to see it published from pole to pole.

2. Prophecy has foretold the universality of the Gospel in the world.

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Can any one doubt that the Son has asked this gift of the Father, and that the Father will fulfil His promise, and grant the petition? "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." The bed of the ocean is not covered with what has only the appearance of water, but the fluid garment offers a pathway to man to every part of the globe; and proud navies float upon the bosom of the deep, and plough their way to every shore. Nor is its channel partially covered; for the furthest ebb leaves for a few hours a very narrow fringe to the vast watery garment. In like manner the real vital knowledge of the Lord shall extend over the whole earth, opening up new modes of communication with every part of the world, and bringing all nations into friendly and Christian intercourse with each other. That ocean-like knowledge shall be a mirror in which the

image of God shall be glassed in matchless fulness and beauty, and Christ in the centre shall draw all hearts together around Him. "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Whatever men may predict or desire, the end shall not come till this be accomplished. The stone cut out without hands shall smite every image, and break it in pieces, and become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. "The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed; but He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall hold them in derision." All opposition shall be borne down, and all hostile plans defeated; for "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

The Lord aims at universal dominion, and His triumphs shall not stop, till "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." This is the sublime prospect that prophecy opens to us in the future. In God's own time and way it shall come to pass. No power can hinder its accomplishment. All things are possible with God. "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and

the rough ways shall be made smooth." Mountains of difficulties shall melt before Him; and guilt shall hide its head. The prophetical Church is more glorious than the historical Church, for the Church of the past is but a child to the full-grown manhood of the Church of the future. In regard to this subject it is not true that "the old is better;" for here the new is far riper, and larger, and more triumphant than the old. The best comes last. "Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." He is not yet satisfied; for He has not yet seen the full effects and fruit of the travail of His soul. All things have not yet become new; but this shall come to pass, and His eye shall gaze in rapture on brighter scenes than any He has yet beheld in our cloudy and sinful world, when the groanings of creation shall die away into the exulting hallelujahs of life and triumph,—when the sweet incense of faith and love, humility, praise, and prayer, shall ascend from the altar of every heart; and when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. It is but early dawn. We are only in the dim morning twilight. But the perfect day is coming. The face of prophecy is radiant with its light. A glowing and spreading brightness gilds the edge of the clouds. God points us to the future; and we should look in faith and hope in that direction.

We must ascend the Pisgah-top of the promises, if we would obtain a clear view of the Promised Land, and behold that glorious future of the Church, lying calm, and sunny, and fruitful, in the light of God's countenance, ere long to become a joyful present, and then remain an immortal past, —eclipsing all that has gone before it,—shedding upon history all the glories of prophecy,—and making poetry grow pale in presence of the living and visible wonders of redeeming love. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense."

Impatient spirits may say, "We see no sign of this glowing prophetical picture being realized. The Gospel-kingdom makes slow progress. What are all its converts among so many? Nearly three hundred and fifty millions of human beings in China are living without hope, and without God in the world." This savours of the spirit that was predicted to say in the last days, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Let us not forget the answer of inspired Peter to this objection;—"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should

come to repentance." 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9. We may by erroneous interpretations be contracting within too narrow limits the field which God has measured out for Himself. His plans are vast, and, in relation to our limited minds, infinite. They require long eras for their development. A day is longer to us than a thousand years are to God. We observe the small wheels of a machine making many rapid revolutions for one turn of the large wheel, which moves at a slow and majestic pace. So the wheels of our limited plans revolve in a short space of time; but the vast wheel of Divine Providence takes many years to turn round, and bring out the grand and capacious results of God's wide and comprehensive government. There is no slackness, no delay; but the mighty orbit in which His designs move requires long periods to develope them, and bring them to a triumphant issue. Many wise and gracious subordinate objects are subserved in the gradual and majestic development of His government. The coming of the Lord may be farther off than many imagine. God is waiting to be gracious, and giving a prolonged and emphatic proof to the world that He is not willing that any should perish. In our eagerness to vindicate favourite theories of prophetical interpretation, let us beware of endeavouring to shut the door of mercy which God is keeping open, and to bring to a speedy close the season of grace,—the day of

salvation, which He is lengthening out in the plenitude of His love. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Isaiah lv. 8.

Another consideration suggests itself here. The spread of the Gospel may go on much more rapidly afterwards than at present, and a nation may be born to God in a day. There may be a manifestation of power over the whole area of the Church, resembling that which appeared on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were converted by a single sermon. The hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. His Spirit is as omnipotent and effectual as ever He was. In former times in our land hundreds fell down wounded by the arrows of the truth and became new creatures. Christ apprehended them, and they had no desire to fly away. They were drawn to the cross and melted, and kept there willing captives. The quoting of a text went home to them. A precept or a promise, a warning or an invitation, did the work. Almost every shot told. Even an arrow, shot from a bow at a venture, was directed by an invisible hand, and, penetrating between the joints of the harness, stuck fast in the sinner's heart. The Spirit was in every word and look; the people were bowed down under the power of His grace; and the dead lived, and the lame walked, and the dumb spake, and praised the Lord.

It cannot be denied that this is not the state of things among us now. Never perhaps was there a greater amount of agency employed for Christian instruction than at present. The Gospel is widely diffused among us; and in many cases it is preached with great ability and faithfulness. It would be untrue to say that no good is done; but what heart that yearns for the salvation of sinners does not mourn over the disproportional amount of fruit! It should not content us to say, that the Holy Spirit is free and sovereign, and blows and works where He lists. He honours those who honour him; and seldom, if ever, fails to bless His own appointed means when employed in a right spirit. There may be something in the state of all Protestant Churches to offend Him, and provoke Him to withhold His blessing. Let none think his own Church perfect and faultless. He must be a blind man who is not struck with the difference between the Gospel-model, and the living spirit of the best existing Church. The living epistles are faint and blotted, compared with the Epistle of the Word. In every section of the Church, *man* is made too much of; I do not mean in preaching, but in spirit, word, and action. "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag." Habakkuk i. 16. The hammer is extolled, and the Divine arm of Him who wields it is too much forgotten. The Lord is ac-

knowledged; but man is brought too near His throne. The praise of human agents is enormous and alarming. Many good men have been damaged by this unholy incense; and it cannot but grieve the Holy Spirit, who is a jealous God, and will not give His glory to another. Nor are Churches faultless in regard to their contributions, and labours. They are not satisfied with telling it to the Church, but they must tell it to the world, and mingle sacred things with the common news of the day. The left hand knows too much what the right hand is doing. We have too little of the single eye; and too little faith in, and sympathy with, the precious promise, that He who seeth in secret will reward us openly. We aim too little at the conversion of sinners in preaching, and have too little faith in God's will and power to save souls by our instrumentality; and too little prayer is offered up in the families and closets of private Christians, for the blessing of God on the proclamation of the truth. These and other dead flies in the ointment may render it so offensive to God, that He may signify His displeasure by allowing His servants to spend their strength for nought, till they repent of their sins, and return to Him, and work for Him, and with Him, in simplicity of spirit.

Great and rapid may be the triumphs of the Gospel when the old leaven shall be purged out. The

Lord will have it to be seen to be His work. He lets us labour, in great measure, in vain, that we may feel our weakness and unworthiness, and learn on our knees that without Him we can do nothing. When all hearts and all eyes shall be turned to Him, He will do great things for us, whereof we shall be glad. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. "Not unto us," shall call forth an echo from every breast. "What hath God wrought?" shall be the universal exclamation. Then shall it be seen that He can save by many or by few; that He can make the weak strong; and use the worm Jacob as a sharp threshing instrument having teeth, to thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. Then men, as weak as Jonathan and his armour-bearer, shall smite the Philistines, and be crowned with victory. The seed that lay long without germinating in the soil shall spring up; and over the length and breadth of the land shall be seen a rich harvest of renewed souls. Then man shall be lost sight of, and the Lord shall be everywhere, and fill all in all. Men shall spread their garments and prostrate their hearts in His way as He rides in triumph. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the

heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." Psalm xlv. 3—5.

The bow of promise is still in the cloud, the pledge of Divine faithfulness and the symbol of coming triumph and glory. What the Lord has done before, He can do again; and He will do greater things, that we may marvel. A bright future is before the Church, and Christ fills it with His triumphs and glory. He at first put His foot on the earth as a conqueror, with a calm and Divine consciousness of power, moving toward His object without a perturbing effort, as having ever in reserve greater strength than was needed; and, vast though His benignant design was, sure of accomplishing it. He spoke of the conquest of the world, as one who knew He could make it His own, and felt He was equal to the grand achievement. Can He fail now that He has vanquished sin and death, —has all power given to Him in heaven and on earth, and can send the Holy Spirit to whomsoever He will? He created the world, and He will remodel it, and renew the face of the earth. He will not fail to take to Himself His great power and reign. Glorious prophecy shall become glorious history. Noble are the spoils He shall gather, when the blossom of promise shall ripen into the fruit of reality; and all nations shall sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to their taste. May God speed

the happy day when the Sun of righteousness shall shine on every land; when Christ shall break every yoke, undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free; when all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest; and great shall be the peace of His children.

A few additional remarks will bring the whole subject to a conclusion.

1. Since the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is fitted and designed to be universal, it becomes us to ask whether it has been received by us.

Are we fighting against God, and standing in the way of the triumphs of the cross in our own hearts? Do we wish the dominion of Jesus to be universal to all but ourselves? Are we willing that others should be taken, and we left; that others should be saved, and we perish? Would we rather sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, than see the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts? Do we darken our souls to keep out the warm and healing beams of the Sun of righteousness? Christ stands at the door and knocks, and do we refuse to open the door, that He may come in? He calls, and do we refuse to run at His call? Do we think that His religion is required for the outcasts of society, or the poor and weary children of toil, but that we can dispense with it, and are both law and Gospel unto ourselves? If so, we stand in the way of Christ's universal dominion. We are obstruc-

tionists, and would stop the King on His own highway. By exempting ourselves from His sway, we are opposing His Sovereign will, and virtually saying to Him, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." We are doing what we can to thwart and defeat His gracious purposes. We are barring Him out of part of His own dominions. Our hearts are His, and we will not surrender them. By refusing to have Him to reign over us, we declare that He shall not be universal King, for He shall not be our King. This refusal entails upon us a heavy loss. We exclude ourselves from a share in the choicest blessings of Divine love. We turn away from the dominion of Him, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light;—whose influence is the most powerful to enlighten, sanctify, strengthen, and soothe the soul;—the renewer of the heart, the safeguard of families, and the crown and glory of nations. His extending sway is not another flood to drown the world, but a fertilizing river, like the Nile, to enrich the earth with abundance, and adorn it with beauty, and fill it with peace and joy.

2. Since the dominion of Christ is fitted and designed to be universal, we should rejoice in every victory over error and sin, as a step toward His benignant and universal reign.

We sympathize with the struggles of an oppressed people battling for freedom; our hearts

go with those who bravely endeavour to turn back the flood of barbarism and cruelty that threatens to sweep over the civilized world, and put back the clock of human improvement and happiness; we rejoice in the progress of the philanthropist, whose tender and warm heart bleeds at the woes of humanity, and whose greatest luxury is to do good;—and should we be indifferent when the Captain of our salvation rides forth on His conquests of love? He sympathizes with us in our sorrows and defeats, and should we not sympathize with Him in His joys and victories? His are the sublimest triumphs ever achieved on earth. The people fall under Him, to be lifted up and blessed. Every victory brings salvation to the conquered. Every wound He inflicts He heals. Every death is the seed of life. Every captive is made free. Neither fire nor bloodshed marks His course. He sheds no blood but His own. He bears the scars of the wounds He received in dying for us; and shall we not watch His progress with intense delight; and hail every advantage He gains over the worst enemy of God and man? His are victories of love, gained not for Himself but for us; let us hail them, and thank God for them when they come, and daily pray for more. Nor let our sympathetic interest be wanting when He repairs the breaches of Zion, and rebuilds the ruined walls of Jerusalem. It is a glorious work when Churches are

reformed and purified,—when the slumbering awake, and the languid are revived,—when the voice of the Good Shepherd begins to be heard, and is distinguished from the conflicting voices of man,—when those who have lost their hands find again the use of them,—when the fire of heaven bursts forth amid the old ashes which had nearly put it out,—and when the Lord walks among the golden lamps, and supplies them with the oil of the Spirit, and trims them with His own hand, and makes their flickering flames burn bright and strong.

3. Since the dominion of Christ is fitted and designed to be universal, we should apply it to every sphere of our life.

Christ should be kept out of no part of the circle of our thoughts, from no corner of our hearts, and from no section of our life. His dominion should be universal as to our thoughts and affections, our spirit and temper, our words and actions. He is Lord of the Sabbath-day, and should be honoured on that day; but He is Lord of all days, and should fill them all. He should be served in His own House; but we should also bow to His dominion at home, and look up to Him as the Head of our own houses. He is to be sought and enjoyed at His own Table on Sacramental seasons of Holy Communion; but He must rule also at our own tables, and His fellowship and peace be enjoyed there. Our whole life should

take its tone and derive its colour from Him. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

4. Since the dominion of Christ is fitted and designed to be universal, we should help to make it universal as to others.

Are we arresting the progress of His kingdom by the spirit we cherish, the ends we are aiming at, the words we speak, the deeds we do, and what we omit to do? Is Christ wounded in the house of His friends? Do professing disciples crucify Him afresh, and put Him to open shame? Do friendly hands lend themselves to be directed by Satan, to drive home the nails again, exciting new pangs, and causing the blood again to flow? Are we commending the truth to every man's conscience by adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour? or are we by our conduct giving the Gospel a bad savour, causing the daughters of the Philistines to rejoice, and hardening and repelling those whom Christ would take to His heart? Is the Dove-like Spirit grieved, so that with mighty wings outspread He no longer sits brooding on the vast abyss, and makes it pregnant? As we pursue our courses of carnal policy, and hurry away with boiling hearts to do our cruel work at Damascus, do we not hear the voice of Jesus in the way, saying to every offender, "Why persecutest thou me?"

We are not at liberty to fold our hands, and

leave the work to the Lord. He alone can bless it, and He alone should have the honour of its success; but His people are His instruments for carrying it on, and should be fellow-workers with Him. If we are willing, we can all do something to forward this blessed issue, and make the reign of Christ universal. "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." He who will not work the work of the Lord shall not eat the harvest of success. That joy will not be his joy. We should all be eager to put a stone into the sacred building which the great Master-builder is rearing into a living temple of immortal souls. We are bound to put our hand to the plough, that the whole field of the world may be ploughed, and the good seed sown in it. We should all put our shoulder to the wheel, when the chariot of Christ seems to stand still. We must all take part in the battle, if we would rejoice in and benefit by the victory. We cannot be too zealous that Christ's seamless garment may not only clothe and adorn all our countrymen at home, but also all our fellow-men abroad; for the soul is naked without this Divine raiment. It fits persons of every size; and is beautiful and graceful, whether worn by man or woman, by old or young. What a blessing! to lead men to know and feel the power of our Lord's resurrection, that every dead Lazarus may be loosed and let go from the cerements of spiritual

death, and may "come forth" from the sepulchre of sin at the Master's call. The dead man whose body was let down into the prophet's grave came to life, when he touched his bones, and it behoves us to try to bring the dead into contact with Christ, that they may feel the pure pulsations of a new and an immortal existence, and may rise with Him, and walk with Him in newness of life. Let us not be backward. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Let every one help to publish the remedy for lost souls, that all may hear the glad tidings, and that those who are dying of the bite of the old serpent may look and live. Let love flow from heart to heart, and the torch of truth pass from hand to hand, that man may no longer grope his way in the dark, but may have the true light to guide his steps in this world, and usher him in joy into the world to come.

5. If we would give full effect to our efforts to help to make Christ's dominion universal, we must combine all the elements that the Lord combines Himself.

"What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Truth and love must go hand in hand, for God has formed between them a close and inseparable union. The same authority that commands us to believe commands us to love. The heretic and the hater stand in the category of disobedience to the Lord. Not only must truth

be emblazoned on our banner, but love must reign in our hearts. Love oils the wheels, love fills the sails of truth.

The prayer of Milton at the opening of Paradise Lost should be in spirit the prayer of all in doing the work of the Lord.

> "And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for thou know'st."

Not only should we remember that unless His presence go with us we had better not be carried up hence,—that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; but also that before all temples the Holy Spirit prefers the upright heart and pure; and that there are feelings and states of mind which He will not bless. The men were punished who offered strange fire on His altar in former times; and we shall not escape if we offer unholy fire. God will not accept it. One of the leading characteristics of the upright heart and pure is singleness and simplicity of purpose. This was a prominent feature in the character of the Lord Himself in His sojourn on earth. He had a single eye, a simple, straightforward purpose, from which he never deviated. He hates double-mindedness. He loves an artless, ingenuous spirit. He extols Nathaniel, and holds him up as a pattern in this respect, as an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Craft has no place

among the graces of the Spirit. It belongs to the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. The Jesuits tried it in China, and it recoiled upon them with infamy, and seriously injured the cause of Christ. It may insure a triumph to the spirit of party; but what is a victory to man is a heavy blow to the cause of the Lord. Guile is a carnal weapon, and dishonours the spiritual warfare of the soldiers of Christ. It betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. He loves to see in us the open single-heartedness of a little child. Prudence becomes cunning and artful, when not tempered by transparent ingenuousness. "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

6. If we would extend the dominion of the Lord by our personal character, we must be brought into close and daily contact with the written Word.

We must not only begin with it, but go on with it, and end with it. The oldest are but babes; and they require every day to draw from the breast of the Word the pure milk of the truth, that they may grow thereby. We cannot be a sweet-smelling savour without it. This is necessary to maintain the freshness of our religious feelings, and feed the flame of pure devotion. The riper the Christian character, the more intense the love of the Bible. Dying saints will hear nothing else. This is the treasured volume in which their de-

parting spirits delight. Fragrant are its promises; and the name of the Beloved is as ointment poured forth. If we go to this Book only for subjects to treat, for materials for composition, for images and illustrations, or for arguments in debate,—its richest treasures for the heart will escape us. We must go to it to be taught of God. We must go to it to be sanctified. We must go to it for spiritual nourishment, lest God grant us our request, and send leanness into our souls. We must esteem that Word more than necessary food. We must drink in its balmy influence, and bathe the soul in its pure streams, with no distracting aim to bar the entrance of its light and life. We must go to it to have the heart warmed, and the Christian emotions fanned into a brighter flame; and then breathing its spirit, the world shall see that we have been with Jesus. "I use the Scripture, not as an arsenal to be resorted to only for arms and weapons to defend this party, or defeat its enemies, but as a matchless temple, where I delight to be to contemplate the beauty, the symmetry, and the magnificence of the structure, and to increase my awe and excite my devotion to the Deity there preached and adored."—*The Hon. Robert Boyle.*

7. If we would extend the dominion of the Lord, we must have confidence in the truth, as His instrument for propagating and sustaining His sway.

In communicating instruction to the ignorant,

it behoves us, doubtless, to adapt ourselves to the capacities and progress of the parties to be taught. To plunge into the most profound and difficult things at the outset is to reverse the natural order of things,—to put the last first, and the first last, —to defeat the great object of instruction, and to bewilder and perplex the mind. The mastery of one truth prepares the way for the understanding and appreciation of another. This method of gradual advancement was adopted by our Lord. He began with the dim morning light, gradually leading His disciples into the brightness of the perfect day. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." John xvi. 12. There is milk for babes; and strong meat for full-grown men. We are to begin with first principles, but not to end with them. "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Heb. vi. 1.

There is a mode of withholding, or rather suppressing the truth, which does not fall under the rule of adaptation just indicated. The doctrine of reserve, taught in the Oxford Tracts, has excited just and vehement indignation in the hearts of all true Protestants, as encouraging men to keep back the distinctive and glorious doctrines of the Gospel from perishing sinners,—the atoning blood of Christ, the very remedy which God has provided to heal and save them; but the same spirit may

present itself in other forms, scarcely less deleterious. If our trumpet gives an uncertain sound, lest we should marshal a hostile army against ourselves, we are reserving what the Lord commanded us to publish. If we preserve a selfish and treacherous silence, lest we should attract attention to something we wish to prop up; if we will not fire a gun, lest we should bring down our rotten fabric about our ears;—we are guilty of betraying our Master's cause. The truth must be told, though the craft of the silver-shrine-makers should be endangered. Then again, if truth is suppressed; if what is uttered is concealed; and the usual organs of public communication are tampered with; and the representation given is deceptive; lest an outcry should be raised, and the hands of opponents strengthened;—an unworthy distrust of the truth is felt by the professed disciples of Him who is the truth, and who came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Let the truth of God on every subject be spoken in a right spirit, and let the result be left in His own hands. Not unto us, but unto Him do the issues belong. The Apostles were not deterred from delivering their message, because they were accused of turning the world upside down. We are not at liberty to clip, and pare, and mutilate the truth for the sake of peace. Better is it to see truth fighting and conquering, than chained, gagged, and buried. Its proclama-

tion will make a commotion among evil elements; but the effect will be to usher in a better state of things. A sultry calm, pregnant with miasma, is dangerous; but the calm after a storm is safe, pure, and exhilarating. Great is the truth, and it shall prevail. Let it be uttered by a heart of faith and lips of love, and we have nothing to fear. The tempests that awake at the voice of human passions, and are blown into violence by the spirit of carnal-mindedness which is death, may well make us tremble; but the tempests evoked by a meek, affectionate, though firm declaration of the whole counsel of God, are the precursors of fresh blessing, and the enemies of the truth, and not its friends, are answerable for the storm. The Spirit broods over the dark chaos, and there emerges the blooming glory of Eden. If men will lift up the gates, the King of glory will enter in the calm majesty of love and peace; but if opposition be made to His triumphal entrance, He will storm the city, and take possession of it as the Lord of hosts, mighty in battle. In such a season of agitation we may look to Him in filial confidence; and He will hide and shelter His people till the storm be overpast. He rides on the whirlwind and will subdue it. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm xlvi. 1—3.

8. If we would promote the universal supremacy and dominion of Christ in the world, we must forget ourselves, and think only of Him.

The Son of God emptied Himself that He might fill us with the fulness of God; and we should empty ourselves to honour Him, that He may reign in our hearts, and have no rival there. "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and these are contrary the one to the other." A part of this antagonism of the flesh is the spirit of "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence." It is a spirit of intense self-consciousness. It moves in a circle of which self is the centre. Like the spider, it weaves a web to catch flies for itself; and every victim is dragged into its hole for food, where it feasts in secret on its dainties. Diotrephes is aspiring, and would ever vault into the saddle, and ride in triumph,—"the observed of all observers,"—as the man whom the King delighteth to honour. The Gospel is a ladder by which he seeks to climb to the object of his ambition. His appetite of self-appropriation is insatiable. All thunder is his thunder; and everything is an unmannerly corpse that is brought between the wind and his nobility. Everything must give way to make room for

him. Nobody must stand in his light. Truth is imperilled, and the foundations of justice are shaken, if he is not allowed to figure in his coveted pre-eminence. The rights of a sacred cause are touched, when his honour is likely to suffer an eclipse. He brandishes the weapon of truth; and though, like the high priest, he has "Holiness to the Lord" on his forehead, he is all the while fighting for the chief place in the synagogue. He may make many a gyration, but, like the hawk, he is ever after his prey, and does not fail to return to his own nest.

This is self-worship; and the idol must be thrown down, even though the truth of Christ is on its lips. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and not to glorify himself. We must forget ourselves for His sake; and not make His holy truth a pretext for our own honour and aggrandizement. No man may step in before Christ with impunity. The servant is not greater than his Lord. The ambassador must not presume to put himself in the place of his royal Master. The Lord will not pour His grace into such a vessel to make it a vessel of honour for His use. This was the spirit of James and John when they wished to sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. Had it not been driven out of them, and a more noble and self-oblivious spirit implanted, they would never have become the saintly and success-

ful men they did. When those sons of thunder forgot themselves in the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness, and learned to live unto the Lord, and not unto themselves, they became more than conquerors. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Matthew xx. 25—27.

9. To promote the universal dominion of Christ, it is necessary to realize the relation in which we stand to him as our Lord and King.

Some amiable and well-meaning persons are exceedingly averse to entertain and dwell upon this view of Christ's character. They verbally acknowledge His kingly office; but they do not live under it. It is not an easy yoke to them. Nothing but promises will satisfy them. They treat the Bible as if it contained a few pearls among a vast collection of shells,—a little wheat among a great deal of chaff, which they pick out and store up in their minds. They would live on sweetmeats, and luxuriate on cordials; they would be "stayed with flagons, and comforted with apples;" and have no relish for the plain bread of life. But as one kind of food, exclusively taken, is not good for the body;

so neither is it beneficial for the soul to partake only of the luxury of comfort, and to confine the spiritual diet solely to promises. The soul cannot prosper and be in health, when restricted to this single aliment. It is good to feed on the variety of the truth as it is in Jesus. This diversity is eminently conducive to Christian health. Sanctification is higher than comfort. Implicit submission to the will of the Lord is more divine than being soothed. While thankful for the comfort and joy of the Holy Ghost, and pressing the mellow wine out of the ripe clusters of the promises of God's Fatherly love, we should remember that we may be self-indulgent in seeking the exclusive gratification of our appetite for consolation and delight. By losing the equilibrium and balance of the mind, and coveting too ardently those things that minister to present satisfaction, we may grow intemperate and shun the cross, aiming more at pleasing ourselves than at pleasing God. Self-denial must be exercised in this as in other matters. "Not my will, O God, but thine be done." We should study to keep everything in its place, and seek to

—"rise on stepping stones
Of our *dead selves* to higher things."

"One thing is needful;" but this one thing is a large thing, and contains many things in its bosom. Precepts and promises are tied up in the same bundle; and there is no healthy relish for the latter

unless the spirit of obedience exercise the taste, and give it a right tone and spiritual discernment. "As bracing exercise, and healthy labour, whet the appetite, and give a zest to the plainest food, so active obedience to Christ imparts a peculiar charm to the exceeding great and precious promises of God. "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." *Every* word is food to his soul, and contributes to the maintenance of his spiritual life. Christ is the living bread that came down from heaven; and He fills every part of the Word; and conveys nourishment to the soul by every aspect of the truth. He is altogether lovely; lovely as a King, as well as lovely as a Priest; lovely in ruling, as well as lovely in soothing. To a heart duly exercised there is a delight in obedience. "In keeping His commandments there is great reward." "Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." "My Lord, and my God." "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day."

By thus showing that we love and honour the supremacy of Christ,—that His kingly office is dear to us,—and that His law is within our hearts, we commend the rights and glory of His crown to the acceptance of others. By being willing, consistent, and happy subjects, and growing in grace and knowledge under His dominion, we shall effectually extol the praises and magnify the reign

of that unrivalled King, under whose dominion we live. It will be seen that His very commands are blessings; and that there is a treasure and a safeguard, a well of comfort and a spring of holiness and perfection, in unreserved subjection to His royal will.

10. The proper attitude of the Church is to look and wait for the coming of the Lord.

Whatever may be the rash statements and mundane interpretations of modern Millenarians, they are unquestionably right in alleging that the Church in our day has very much lost sight of the coming of her Divine and Kingly Head. What was a prominent idea, a solemn and ever present truth, to the Apostolic Church, is now thrown into the background,—dimly seen, and feebly felt. The despotic, grasping, cloudy present has veiled and obscured the brighter future. Because some men have gone too far in treating of this doctrine, many will not look at it at all. Some will have it to cover the whole heavens; as if it was the sum and substance, the beginning and the end, of Christianity; and others, running into the opposite extreme, act as if they would extinguish it, and deny that it shines as a star in God's heavens. But this unwillingness to consider a revealed truth will not blot it out of the Divine Record, nor cancel our obligation to live under its influence, and give it due prominence in our thoughts and aims and hopes. Still the Lord

says to the Church, "Occupy till I come." Still the Apostolic words faithfully delineate the proper posture of the Church, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not less true in our day, than in his own day, is the solemn declaration of James, —"the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

While it should moderate the peremptory tone of one school of writers, to consider that eighteen hundred years have elapsed since the Church began to "wait for the coming of the Lord," and He has not yet come; since James announced that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" since Christ Himself said, "Surely I come quickly;" and Peter, that "the end of all things is at hand," and yet the end has not dawned upon the world; it is also the sacred duty of believers to "look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ." If the Church was exhorted to fix her eye in faith and adoring gratitude on the Lord's coming, while that predicted event was still so far off, surely the argument gathers force from year to year, which directs the heart to the same glorious object. However remote that coming may be, we are nearer it than the Apostles were. It should never be lost sight of. No stunning sounds of present affairs should drown the voice that commands us to "wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus." No brilliant spectacles of earthly grandeur should dazzle our

eyes, and come in between us and the august scene of His return to this world in power and great glory. It is an approaching event of surpassing magnificence, and should bulk more largely and shine more brightly in our eyes, than things much nearer, but comparatively insignificant. Though far more distant, the sun looks as near as the moon, by reason of his superior size and splendour; and the personal return of the Lord of glory should eclipse by its superior importance and grandeur events much nearer home. It may thus be near, and yet far off; rising clear and majestic before us like a lofty mountain, whose hoary head is basking in the effulgent beams of the sun, while the intermediate hills and plains are almost all out of sight.

The coming of our Lord is made clear enough to justify faith in looking with a serene and radiant face of assurance into the future; but there is sufficient obscurity about the precise time to stimulate watchfulness and repress presumption. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." "The Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." "Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The event is clear as noonday, but the hour is veiled in darkness, that the certainty of the manifestation, united to the uncertainty of the time, may keep the Church ever

awake, and render her expectation warm and vivid; that she may not be taken by surprise, but when the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," her lamp may be burning, and with the throbbing, exulting joy of a bride she may go forth to meet Him. By the combination of these two elements the Lord has provided for our spiritual discipline, that we may look and wait in faith and vigilance, as becomes those "who see through a glass darkly, and know only in part."

It is the *duty* of the Church to wait for the coming of the Lord, that she may give an account of her stewardship; but it is the *privilege* and *honour* of the Church to look for His return as her Bridegroom. While they that pierced Him shall mourn, and all nations shall wail because of Him, when they shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven;" it will not be a mournful sight to His people; no wailing, but joy shall burst from the lips of His Bride at the welcome return of her beloved Lord. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He has gone away in person; but He has not deserted her, His heart is still with her; His Spirit still sustains and comforts her; He still enriches her with His gifts, guides her through the wilderness, and makes her all glorious within.

He will not cast her off. He found her lying as an outcast, and after washing and clothing her, and making her His Bride, He will visit her, and live with her, and make her happy. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." Hosea ii. 19—20. That sacred union shall never be dissolved. Let her not sit and weep as a widow; for her Lord liveth, and loveth her, and will own her before the universe, and celebrate His nuptials on a scale of unrivalled grandeur, and with a joy that shall never end. The marriage-feast is coming; and she shall be near Him there; to hear His voice, and gaze upon His Divine beauty, and be enraptured with the holy endearments of His love. She shall then be like Him, for she shall see Him as He is. Let her dry her tears, and anticipate that blessed and endless day. Let her not serve Him with a divided heart, but give herself with all her heart to Him, for He has given Himself with all His heart for her, and to her. Let not cares, and allurements, and sorrows, make her forget the promised meeting. Let her look for that blessed hope, and be ever working for Him, and preparing for Him, till He come. All things point as with a prophetic finger to that coming. The

whole creation groaneth for the full redemption which it shall bring; when He shall restore all things, and create new heavens and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. "Behold, my Beloved looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice." He looks in love at her through the lattice of prophecy, and invites her to look at Him, that she may make herself ready. Should her heart not bow down within her, and prompt her to say, "O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely?" Let her ever have on the wedding garment, that she may need no change when He comes. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" As sure is His coming as if He was already on His way, and joyful hosannas were already heralding His approach. There is music in the sound of His foot. Endless treasures are stored up in His heart. Heaven is in His smile. "It is midnight;" but night is turned into day. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

"And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

The harmony of united hearts makes all things

musical. The prolonged season of separation is over, never to return. The affections and will are one with His, and no string is out of tune. The union is visible as well as real; and the heart has the aid of eye and ear. At this feast no light is needed, for the Lamb is the light thereof. No military force guards the door, for the Lord Himself is a wall of fire around His chosen, and the glory in the midst of her. Love fills and irradiates and encircles the whole scene; and fear, and sorrow, and sighing have fled away. Faith is swallowed up in sight. Jesus is an absent Lord no longer. While yet unseen she rejoiced in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory; but still more deep and calm is her joy, when she beholds the King in His beauty. "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love."

THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETY

AND OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO THOSE ELEMENTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE MOST POWERFULLY TO ITS STABILITY AND ADVANCEMENT.*

THE superiority of a state of nature to the advantages and enjoyments of civilized society, is an opinion which, I presume, will find few advocates in our day. The supporters of this theory have thrown an air of romance over the innocence and simplicity of a life of nature, by dipping their pens in the glowing colours of imagination, and deviating from the path of historical truth. Disappointed in their hopes, and morbid in their feelings, some of them have vented their spleen against the progress of their age and country, by drawing pictures of barbarism so delicately touched, and so softly shaded, as to appear far more lovely, more favourable to virtue, happiness, and freedom, than a highly civilized mode of existence.

Evidence is not wanting to prove that—though in the history of several nations there has been a marked decline in mental and social advance-

* A Lecture delivered to the Young Men's Christian Society, at the Mechanics' Institution, Manchester, February 3, 1848.

ment—society in general is making no doubtful progress. Events, it is true, have occurred at different epochs to arrest, for a season, the rising tide of cultivation and improvement, but the check has been temporary; and what seemed to be the dark close of the drama, has sometimes prepared the way for a new and more permanent movement on a larger scale. The vital element, though trodden down and buried for a season, has not been destroyed; but, after struggling through the superincumbent mass of ignorance and rudeness, has shot up again into greater luxuriance and beauty. When the Roman Empire, for example, was dismembered by the invasion of the barbarians, every promising institution seemed to be dismantled and overturned; universal disorder prevailed; and the sun of Europe appeared to set for ever. But that dark period was a step to something higher than had heretofore been attained. The heterogeneous materials were melted down and fused into one mass, destined to appear in a more goodly form than the world had seen before. Fresh blood was infused into the social system, imparting an energetic spirit of enterprise, and an ardent love of personal freedom, which saved the community from putrid stagnation, and is bounding in our views at the present day. Thus has society advanced in our own and some other countries, presenting periods of ebb and flow, of reflux and stagnation; but after a pause, the slumbering

elements have combined into new forms, and have advanced with accelerated speed and augmented power. As if under the influence of some mighty attractive force, succeeding waves have swept over former barriers, and risen to a height previously unattained. And though dark clouds now lower in the horizon, though sullen ominous murmurs are everywhere heard, the usual precursors of a storm, and signs of approaching conflict force themselves upon the attention of every reflecting mind, we trust that, under the guidance and protection of the same good Providence that has hitherto watched over us, the march of human intellect and social order, and the triumph of truth, will not ultimately be arrested, but a way be opened up to a still brighter era of knowledge, purity, and peace, than has yet dawned upon our benighted world.

The field presented by this subject is so large, that I must necessarily confine myself to a very small part of it.

I.—It will not be unprofitable to glance at some of those things that are most vital in the constitution of well-organized society, and are essential to its healthy action and progressive development.

1. Liberty of conscience, or freedom of thought, may be adduced as one of the most pregnant and influential elements in modern society.

This was one cause of the mighty impulse given to the human mind at the Reformation. Not only was the soul brought into quickening contact with the unadulterated truth of God, which imposture, afraid of the light, had audaciously corrupted and buried, but it was set free from those degrading trammels which had for centuries enslaved and crippled the intellect of man. The energies of the mind, so long cramped and kept down, burst forth in all the freshness of youthful ardour, luxuriating in the freedom which had been so long sighed for in vain. Though the principles of religious toleration were not understood so perfectly as they are now, yet was the change introduced so much for the better, that man thought, and spoke, and wrote, and acted, with an independence which struck at the roots of timid servility, and seemed like life from the dead. The swaddling-bands, girded on by priestly hands with a tightness to repress and enervate mental activity, and arrest all healthy enlargement of soul, were torn off and thrown aside, and the transformation was almost as great as if a child lying in its cradle, or "mewling and puking in its nurse's arms," had suddenly sprung to its feet, and stood before us in the full amplitude and symmetry of manhood. Exulting in their freedom from the painful shackles that had long galled generous and aspiring minds, many thoughtful spirits gave eloquent utterance

to sentiments which had been pent up like burning coals in their breasts; and their fearless and arousing words, falling like sparks on the hearts of others, kindled a flame of inquiry and ardour which spread with rapidity on every side. Conflicting opinions were canvassed and discussed, evidence was sifted, credulity and imposture exposed, and the inalienable right of man exercised, of adopting the conclusion dictated by truth, and spurning the one enjoined by blind and imperious authority. Thus was free inquiry carried into every province of thought, and a disciple of Galileo might pursue his researches and publish his sublime discoveries without dreading the thunders of the remorseless Inquisition.

The cause of pure religion cannot be promoted by fettering freedom of thought and abridging the right of private judgment. Compulsion is not the way to the heart. Infidelity, and superstition, and a burning sense of wrong in the best minds, are among the bitter fruit of stern dictation in matters of faith—not light, and purity, and order. Truth will be served by no press-gang. She owns none but those who flock as volunteers to her standard. She has the hearts of her followers. They receive the truth in the love of it. Desertion never enters their minds. They would not leave her if they could. Those who dare not think for themselves, but must bow to what another imposes, like the

men who went home from Gideon's army, would draw back if allowed, but those whom the truth has made free, speak because they believe; they have enlisted of their own accord, and, like the three hundred picked men with their swords and lamps, who spread such dismay in the camp of the Midianites, they may be counted on as loyal and devoted in the hour of danger. However pure and Divine, truth does not transform and elevate our minds, unless we embrace it from conviction and love. When so received, it makes us like itself,—free indeed. It melts the heart, and stamps its seal upon us. It is cherished as an imperishable reality, a peculiar treasure, to console us amid the delusive images of a world, the fashion of which passeth away. The religion of Jesus, though emphatically glad tidings of great joy, has no music for the ears of persons who give it a feigned or forced assent; they rather hate it the more from the unwelcome restraint under which they are laid; but when hailed with all the ardour and enthusiasm of a first love, there is no melody so sweet and enchanting as its voice. It stirs the soul to its profoundest depths, and diffuses a pure and benignant influence over the whole man. Truth is a sealed fountain, till faith and love draw forth its crystal waters. The ingenuous and candid inquirer, having found the object of his anxious search, feels like the exhausted traveller, who,

after being tantalized and mocked by the deceitful *mirage*, at last finds, amid the burning and inhospitable sands of the desert, a rich green spot, which awaits him like a little paradise, to recruit and reward him after his painful toils.

Freedom of thought is perfectly compatible with reverence for what is sacred, as bearing the sanction of Divine authority. No compliment is paid to truth by an unenlightened and unreasoning assent; for such a state of mind will necessarily mix up the false with the true, and assign to them equal authority. We examine all, not that we may reject all, but that we may disengage the human and treasure up the Divine. We put the gold into the crucible, that we may separate the dross from the pure metal. There is no scepticism surely in the inspired maxim, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" it is a symptom of scepticism to doubt everything, and to bow in reverence and submission to nothing. But it is the boast and glory of Protestantism to reject tradition and human authority, and to appeal to the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the ultimate standard of religious truth. What is clearly taught and established there, demands and should receive willing homage. It is the province of free inquiry to ascertain what the voice of God proclaims in the lively oracles, and then when the holy ground is reached, the shoes are taken off the feet, and faith

stands in a posture of profound reverence, and with open ear catches the truth that falls from the mouth of the living God; then faith holds it fast and will not let it go; it carries it in its bosom as the image and gift of God. Neither ridicule nor force can wrest that treasure out of its hands. When we thus arrive at our creed, we can give a reason for the hope that is in us: we stagger not at the promises or doctrines of God through unbelief, but are strong in faith, giving glory to God.

One of the most alarming signs of the present times is a tendency to throw off all reverence for the sacred and Divine. A spurious liberality, which confounds truth with error, and, if logically followed out, would leave the mind at sea on every religious and moral subject, and land us in universal scepticism, prevails to a melancholy extent. A latitudinarian laxity, under the guise of sentimental charity, which grasps no truth with firmness, and condemns every assault upon error as bigotry and persecution, is, with a numerous class of superficial thinkers, the grand panacea for all our ills. This spawn of German rationalism is capable of bold and reckless speculation, but it wants soul and practical aim, and, so far as its influence goes, it will loosen the firmest bonds of society, and check the moral progress of man. Its triumph would make the sun go back on the dial-plate of improvement. It wants faith, and derives

no impulse or aspiration from the powers of the world to come. It relaxes the authority of conscience by giving an aspect of vagueness and mutability to the Divine will. It is a spirit that will pull down but never build up anything substantial. It will generate vanity, and declamation, and self-indulgence, but never stir the soul to great enterprise. It will produce no martyrs in the cause of Divine truth and Christian benevolence. Much as it boasts of its liberality, it hates revealed truth, and would not be slow to persecute, if it had the power. Witness the cruel and oppressive conduct of its advocates in the Canton de Vaud of Switzerland, where, now that they have gained a triumphant ascendency in the government, they forbid a peaceable class of their Protestant countrymen to worship God according to their consciences. May God defend us from such regenerators of the world!

But let us not shut our eyes to the instructive fact, that this spirit of latitudinarianism is part of the bitter fruit of mental coercion. We are now reaping what persecution has sown. This unbridled and irreverent laxity of opinion is, in great measure, the effect of an indignant reaction against grovelling superstition and grinding bondage. The spring, set free from undue pressure in one direction, has rebounded with a violent recoil to the opposite extreme. Popery, both in France and

Spain, by its galling shackles, has at no remote period produced wide-spread infidelity even among those ministering at the altar. In Germany, writers not being at liberty to express their minds freely on political questions, or find wholesome exercise in the arena of State affairs, seek their revenge in wild speculations in theology; and in our own country a burning indignation has been engendered, in many generous minds, by the records of the dark scenes of former slavery, which has tempted them to rush into excess another way. Our safety lies not in reimposing fetters on freedom of thought, but in being ardent and devoted disciples of truth, and unflinching vindicators of its claims. If we put a strait-waistcoat of restriction upon the mind, everything suffers; science and art languish; our movements become mechanical, not free and conscientious; pulled and controlled like puppets, the lofty aspirations of the soul die, and inanimate uniformity reigns. Let truth have fair play, let her children be loyal and zealous in her cause, and she has nothing to fear from discussion and free inquiry. She will come out of the furnace of conflict brighter and purer than before, not a hair of her head nor a thread of her garments singed, commanding the respect even of her enemies, and turning Nebuchadnezzars into friends, "bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

2. Domestic influence has operated in a manner eminently beneficial to the development of society.

Interests of vast moment depend upon the place assigned to woman in the family circle. She is powerless for good when out of her legitimate sphere, and her oppressor is punished by losing those benign and softening influences which emanate from the plastic charities of her nature, and form one of the most powerful safeguards of society. The study of the existing monuments of ancient nations has furnished some striking examples of the consideration and respect enjoyed by the female sex in a period of high civilisation, in countries where the memory of former elegance and splendour alone survives; and where the human mind has sunk into torpor and degradation. In the minute delineations of domestic life preserved in the Egyptian tombs, we behold woman seated at table and mixing freely in society, much as among ourselves at the present day, while the furniture and other accompanying objects in those wonderful pictures indicate a state of social refinement which we now look for in vain in that famous cradle of ancient civilisation. Visit that land now, and what do you find? Woman shut up in jealous seclusion, her mind debilitated and uncultivated; and, as if in signal retribution for the ungenerous cruelty, the population is sunk in ignorance and misery, with nothing to rival the social order and

elevation of those early and brilliant times. The same phenomenon offers itself to our notice in the artistic remains of ancient Etruria. The grave of that wonderful country presents us with her history in the days of her illustrious prime. Her painted tombs emblazon woman in the centre of her prosperity, when art waited on the enjoyments of family life. The elevating influence of the female sex was felt to add grace to that era of prosperity and elegance, and it is acknowledged and immortalized in the posthumous records which modern industry has brought to light.

Not without adequate reason has it been asserted that, in the midst of his family, the great feudal proprietor and warrior found a powerful counteraction to the asperities of his nature and the violence of his passions and habits. When returning from war or hunting, he was received into the bosom of his family in his solitary castle, where his rough temper was smoothed down by the gentle influence of female society, his heart enlarged and his affections purified by the warm and genial sympathies of domestic intercourse. The haughty chief doffed his helmet, put off his coat of mail, laid aside his sword and spear, and instead of cleaving down enemies, he clasped his children in his arms; and his proud spirit was tamed and his manners polished by the gentle amenities of those whom he loved. The family was the school where

his mind was taught to grow; for in that calm sunny region his heart learned to pity in seasons of distress, and to exult and disburden itself in hours of family joy. His wife and children were his teachers. The conqueror came home to be conquered himself. The hard icy heart was melted under the thawing atmosphere of his cheerful hall; and vernal influences played around him, which unconsciously moulded his stern nature after a more kindly type, and, by bringing down the hero, elevated the man.

One of the most valuable safeguards of British society is to be found in the enjoyments of home, and that attachment to the quiet and soothing pleasures of domestic life, which happily distinguishes so large a portion of the population of this renowned and favoured island. May such a taste never lose its charm among us; for in its decline and extinction we should witness the downfall of one of our most trustworthy bulwarks. To this dignified and ennobling predilection, we owe not a little of the stability of our character. The feebleness, I had almost said the absence, of this feeling, in France, more especially in Paris, is a prolific source of danger to that country. A Frenchman has no home, in our sense of the word, around which his tenderest thoughts revolve, to which he flies for refuge in sorrow; the scene of his best discipline and his happiest hours. He flies out of

doors for solace, and thereby loses a vast amount of the most valuable moral training; whereas every person of well-regulated mind in this country seeks in his home an asylum from care and sorrow. The spirit he imbibes there imposes a powerful and salutary check on volatility and restlessness of mind. His heart being softened by endearing associations, he feels he has a valuable stake in the country, something he would not willingly lose or endanger: and this renders him reluctant to lend his influence to promote any perilous change. A healthy spirit is thus silently diffused through society, which helps to promote general affability and order, and begets a strong bias in favour of the maintenance of peace. The arts of civilized life are thus the more assiduously cultivated, and the national mind is accelerated along the path of improvement.

Some of us may be able to trace part of the advantages we enjoy to the family in the bosom of which we were reared; but we owe more to that source than we can explain. In that benignant nursery, the child is formed who is father of the man. There the seed of future goodness is often sown by a watchful mother's hand, watered with her tears, and warmed and quickened by her prayers. The wisdom and goodness of God are both conspicuous in placing us during our most impressible and tender years under the gentle care

of maternal love. Could we measure our mental and moral growth during different years, as we can note the enlargement of trees by those concentric rings which form an indelible record of each season's progress, we should find broad belts of expansion registering the powerful influence produced upon our dispositions and habits under the parental roof. The lessons learned there often restrain when they do not sanctify; and after appearing to be forgotten, burst into life and assert their undying pre-eminence at a future period. "The bread cast upon the waters is found after many days." The persuasive tones of an affectionate mother sound in our ears and haunt our dreams long after she is laid in her grave. Though dead she speaketh. This hallowed influence followed John Newton over land and sea for years; it stole upon his heart amid the cruelties of the slave-trade, and combined with a higher agency to act upon him like the attraction of the solar sphere, drawing him back from his erratic course, until he rejoiced in the life-giving glory of the Sun of Righteousness. The well-ordered families of this favoured land are daily sending forth streams of humanizing influence, which percolate through the different strata of society, sweetening the bitter waters engendered by fierce passion. Thousands are thus saved from destruction, who would inevitably be wrecked, unless

launched on the sea of life under the genial impulses of their early home.

3. Voluntary association, by stimulating the mind and enlisting sympathy on the side of truth and improvement, has had a powerful influence in expanding man's intellectual character and improving the general condition of society.

Though this is a feature of society which in its organized form is rather peculiar to our own times, its influence may be distinctly traced to those epochs of history which were distinguished for mental activity or social progress. Association has its seat in the original constitution of human nature. It springs out of the social sympathies of man, which have been implanted in the heart by a wise and benevolent Creator, to draw us into enlightened fellowship and hearty co-operation. We see it operating in the formation of the schools of ancient philosophy, uniting inquiring minds together in a common course, and rendering them by the power of combination more enthusiastic and eloquent advocates of favourite principles. We observe it in the animating correspondence of literary men at the revival of letters, when the budding impulses of returning spring, after a long and dreary winter, warmed the generous hearts of many devoted friends of learning, who communicated their ardent hopes and aspirations to others, kindling in their breasts a fervour and devotedness

kindred to their own. We perceive in it Luther, propagating his own glowing thoughts to the circle of choice spirits drawing around him at Wittenberg, from which, as a common centre, the electric element passed with lightning speed, by numerous conductors, through the whole of Germany, causing the hearts of thousands to thrill with unwonted delight. We discern it in India, where the philosophical and eloquent Mackintosh engendered, by the exciting powers of his conversation, a spirit of inquiry in many of those who were attracted by his brilliant talents and benignant character, leading them to devote themselves to particular subjects of investigation, and thus rendering men authors and benefactors of their race, who might otherwise have slumbered in mental torpor till called away to sleep in the grave. It is thus that men of genius in science and philosophy, and gifted students of Christian truth, become most easily the nuclei of new ideas and the propagators of a salutary impulse to the human mind. Like the central orbs of the magnificent systems in the starry heavens, they attract minds of a congenial order, though of an inferior power, and associate these with themselves as friendly luminaries to cheer and guide their fellow-men. Unconsciously marshalled into order by the disposing hand of Providence, the more prominent benefactors of the world fulfil their course, augmenting the stock of

human knowledge, elevating the tone of thinking, swelling the stream of improvement, arousing other minds to action, and thus train successors to carry forward the movement after its originators are mouldering in the dust.

But in our own times we see the principle of spontaneous association embodied in forms of systematic organization, founded on the conviction of its utility in advancing the mental improvement and social happiness of man. Though doubtless open to abuse, when persons trust entirely to external influence, and are not at pains to retire into their own souls, and aim at development of character by thought and discipline, it can hardly be questioned that societies are capable of being converted into mighty engines for advancing the intellectual, moral, and religious progress of the human race. It is only minds of the highest order that require little stimulus from without. Gifted by nature with some indomitable bent or taste, they are impelled onward as if by the force of a sleepless instinct, which will not let them rest, but prompts them to seek enjoyment in gratifying the ruling propensity of their souls. But minds of the more common order are not conscious of the same ardent prompting from within; and their slumbering powers are in danger of remaining inactive, unless stimulated by the sympathetic fervour of others. Science and religion have both been, and

may still further be, benefited by this agency. Improvements are not only attempted, but executed, by combined influence and united action, which would never be thought of by single-handed effort. Not only is union strength, but the soul of each man becomes more ardent and energetic by sympathy; the countenance and voice of his coadjutors call forth his latent powers; a generous rivalry bears him onward, and he returns home with a portion of their spirit burning in his heart, bent upon a more entire dedication of his faculties to the work before him. The impulse is not spent till it is renewed, and thus is he wafted along like a ship in full sail before a favouring breeze, bounding like a thing of life over the swelling waves. The voice of his friendly rivals and auxiliaries falls on his ear, like the sound of the martial trumpet on the ear of the war-horse, when he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting. His heart glows, he pants with ardour, and longs to join the noble band.

Nor is this the only way in which the beneficial influence of association is felt; men's abilities are supplementary to each other. There are diversities of gifts, and one has what another has not. Luther and Melanchthon could accomplish together what they could not have done so well apart. Melanchthon was a master in systematic theology, and could present the doctrines of the Gospel in a

form of more perfect coherence and harmony than the great Reformer. But Luther had a gift which his elegant colleague did not possess. He was a Boanerges, a son of thunder, and his words were burning bolts which shot fire into the heart. Luther was impetuous, and his vehemence was much the better of Melanchthon's sweet and gentle influence. But, on the other hand, had Luther's far-seeing and uncompromising spirit not guided and sustained his timid friend, he would have fallen a prey to the arts of Rome. By associating together in a good cause, the defects of men are corrected and supplied by the gifts and graces bestowed by God upon their fellow counsellors and labourers.

Nor should we omit to notice the kindly feelings awakened by the intercourse and co-operation thus produced; friendships are contracted that last for life; we understand each other better; prejudices wear away, and mutual esteem springs up, when the real man stands unveiled before us. And in such a school some find a moral and religious discipline which saves them from dangerous temptations, casts their character into a graceful mould, and assigns them an honourable rank among men of their own age. The seed of future usefulness and happiness is thus sown in the hearts of the young, and many look back with thankfulness to God for the direction thus given to their minds in early life. They find that their time is not spent

in vain. No man is a giver in truth or beneficence without being a receiver. God at once pays him the first instalment of reward for his encouragement. He reaps while he sows. In teaching others he instructs himself. He acquires principles and habits which are a valuable capital and a mighty safeguard to him through life. His efforts are twice blessed, blessed to himself no less than to others.

4. I come to the consideration of Christianity, as the most powerful instrument, in the hand of God, for promoting the progress of society.

Intellectual activity, moral order, and social happiness, are the blessed fruit of our heaven-born religion, wherever its spirit is understood and cordially received. Christianity not only reconciles men to God, and prepares them for heaven, but it furnishes them with principles, and trains them to habits, which fit them for occupying their allotted place on earth with honour to themselves and advantage to others. It makes them kinder masters and more faithful servants; more loving and conscientious parents, and more affectionate and obedient children; it teaches the rich to take a more comprehensive and lively interest in the well-being of the poor, and it nourishes in the hearts of the poor more amiable and enlightened feelings to those placed in a different rank of life. It extends its pure and benevolent influence to rulers

as well as to subjects, and wherever it obtains a lodgement in the hearts of persons intrusted with authority, it inspires a paternal regard for the best interests of those over whom it is exercised. Grievances are gradually ameliorated, and institutions improved by it, and evils which have defied every other remedy have been undermined and swept away by the aggressive power of the religion of the cross. Though a feeble and despised stripling in the eyes of the world, it has smitten to the dust many a gigantic error and abomination, which breathed deadly defiance against the majesty of God.

For many years the lying oracles of this world uttered the sage counsel that you must civilize men before sending them the Gospel. Man must mend and dress up the heathen, before they are fit to be put into God's hands to be benefited by His sovereign remedy. This profane fallacy has been thoroughly exposed by the demonstrative evidence both of argument and experience. It has been found that the Divine religion that saves souls is the most prolific nursery of civilisation. It carries the seed of all goodness in its bosom, and rears in the human soul whatever is beneficial to man. Whatever may be the condition of a people, the gospel of Christ is the very thing to begin with, because it will make all improvement rest on the right foundation, and elevate and enlarge the mind

with a celerity that admits of no parallel. Where is the fruit of civilisation according to the old exploded theory? Where are the heathen it cultivated and prepared for receiving Christianity? They are not to be found. If we should wait for that tardy refiner, we should wait for ever for the signal for the missionary to embark and begin his labour of love. Thanks be unto God that the faith of Christians has stood its ground against the cold, timid anticipations of philosophy falsely so called. The highest wisdom is to trust in God, and treat with honour His own chosen instrument. His plans cannot be reversed, nor His laws violated, without ultimate defeat and signal retribution. Those have achieved most for their species who have gone forth in simple-minded but sublime reliance on the efficacy of Divine truth as the basis of their operations. In the spirit of one greater than Columbus, they have unfurled their sails with hope high and hearts undaunted, amid the sneers of the worldling, but also amid the smiles and the prayers of the faithful, assured that the ship which carries Christ and His promises is a safer ark than the one that carried Cæsar and his fortunes.

The prodigious influence of Christianity in elevating and improving the condition of mankind may be estimated by the happy change produced by it upon persons sunk in the most abject and hopeless degradation, and in circumstances ex-

cluding the acknowledgment of any rival instrumentality. Dr. Prichard remarks, in his "Physical History of Mankind," that individuals of the most degraded tribes of Africa, who were found so stupid and wretched as to be almost on a level with the beasts of the field, and were considered incurably inferior to the other tribes, have by missionary instruction been made to falsify the theory of their essential inferiority, by the discovery of an intelligence and aptitude for learning that was never credited, until they were reclaimed by the efficacy of Divine truth. Similar is the testimony of the devoted Brainerd, as to the effect of his self-denying operations among the Indians in New Jersey. "It is worthy of remark," he says, "that numbers of these people are brought to a strict compliance with the rules of *morality and sobriety*, and to a conscientious performance of the *external duties* of Christianity, by the internal power of Divine truth, without their having these moral duties frequently repeated and inculcated upon them. Drunkenness, the darling vice, was broken off from; and the abusive practice of husbands and wives in putting away each other and taking others in their stead was quickly reformed." The romantic narrative of the sagacious and energetic Moffat presents many striking pictures of this benignant influence and glorious transformation among the degraded Africans. We see them emerge from filth to cleanliness, from

habits of war and licentiousness to those of peace and self-control. The expression of the countenance changes, and new thoughts and feelings look out through their eyes, and impress themselves upon the face; and those who wandered about in a state of nudity, and made violence and bloodshed a trade, are subdued by the love of Christ, sit at the feet of their teachers, clothed and in their right mind, and become examples of industry, kindness, and order. Nor can I omit all reference to the memorable scenes of Gospel triumph in the lovely islands of the South Seas, as detailed by Ellis and Williams, where idolatry, infanticide, and other kindred abominations were swept away by the arm of the Redeemer, and morality, peace, and commerce sprung up and flourished under the gentle protection of pure Christianity. Unhappy Tahiti was once thus blessed. Her enfranchised children were walking in the light that had converted their isle into an Eden. But the cheek of malice grew pale at that sweet spectacle of faith and joy, and the innocent were blackened that wickedness might have an excuse for its cruelty. A nation that boasts of its chivalrous spirit sought to exalt its name by assailing an inoffensive queen and her innocent subjects, the very objects that true greatness would have shielded in the hour of need. Peace be to thy memory, oppressed Tahiti! Thou art greater in thine ashes than France is in

her conquest. Persecution has trodden in the dust the vernal promise of thy opening prosperity; but the reckless power that has tried to forge thy chains and dig thy grave must bow to a still mightier arm. Thy Guardian and Defender is above, and He will not forget thy wrongs, nor turn a deaf ear to thy tears and thy prayers.

If we look round upon the larger kingdoms of the earth, we shall find abundant confirmation of the truth of this view. Why, are *we* not naturally led to ask, are the nations that have embraced Christianity so superior in all great and good qualities to those who are not under its influence? Why is Asia so far behind Europe? Who can deny that the civilisation of the one is far superior to that of the other? Again, glance at those countries in which Christianity exists in greatest purity, and has struck its roots most deeply, and spread out its branches most widely, and you find that they have attained an eminence in all the constituent elements of real advancement, which throws into the shade all those kingdoms that are cursed with religious error. Compare the north of Ireland, where industrious habits exist, and life and property are safe, with the south of that island, where the social state is heaving with disorganization, and a sense of moral obligation seems almost extinguished. Compare Flanders with Great Britain, and you have the same marked

contrast. Take into your hand a map of the world, and colour the most reformed countries with a light tinge, and the least reformed and the Popish with dark ones, differing in shade according to their religious state, and you will not produce a greater distinction between them, than what is warranted by the different habits and sentiments that prevail in them respectively. The tone of morals is far more elevated, and all the useful arts of life in a more flourishing condition, in the most Christian countries. In the one we see Goshen with its light, in the other Egypt with its darkness.

It is Christianity, accordingly, that opens up the most magnificent prospects in the career of man. It imparts to the improvement of the human mind an extent and variety and compass which it never had in the brightest days of Greek and Roman fame. By its harmonizing influence it brings into union elements apparently the most discordant, and causes them to co-operate for one common end. The leopard lies down with the lamb. The Gospel draws together the disjointed bones, and forms them into a living body. Hence the brightest days to come, to which the progress of society points, are clad in the glory of the Gospel of Peace. The future is full of hope, because filled with the triumphs of a pure faith. Systems once highly extolled have become obsolete, and are thrown aside because man has outgrown them. They have

been put away as childish things, unbecoming the mature manhood of our race. But never shall the heaven-born system of Christianity be outgrown and left behind. However high we climb in improvement, it is above us. Nations have outstripped the lessons they have received, and have surpassed the models of their masters, but the Gospel will keep ahead of mankind in their furthest progress; and after the most sanguine expectations have been realized, and the glory of past times been signally eclipsed, it will be found, like the star that guided the wise men to Jesus, still directing the course of improvement, and conducting the human mind onward and upward to perfection.

II.—I have left so little room for the second branch of my subject, that I can do little more than glance at a few points.—Our duty in regard to those elements which contribute most powerfully to the advancement of society.

One very obvious remark is, that it is our unquestionable duty to encourage, by every legitimate means, those religious and moral elements which are mainly instrumental, under the providence of God, in propelling the human family along the path of improvement and happiness. A sound faith or right views of our relation to God, and a pure morality, or a religious and enlightened acknowledgment of the mutual obligations be-

tween man and man, lie at the foundation of true social well-being and progress. Stability cannot be counted upon; the most promising signs of prosperity will prove fallacious when the worm of laxity of principle and corruption is eating away the root of the gourd. We are bound, therefore, to lend our influence to strengthen the basis of all greatness, that the superstructure may not sink and fall to pieces after sanguine hopes are entertained of its completion, but that every stone that is added to the social edifice may give compactness and solidity to the fabric, and develop the model-plan of the great Master Builder, whose foundation is the rock of ages, and His cement the well-tried compound of truth and love. And in throwing in our weight on the side of Divine truth and pure morality, we may be sure that we are contributing in the best possible way to mental activity and healthy enterprise. It is the prerogative of truth to break up the fallow ground, and to cover it with trees pleasant to the eyes and good for food. It places the mind of man upon an eminence, gives him a wide view of things, stimulates his curiosity, enlarges his sympathies, and promotes a state of healthy action both in the faculties of the mind and the affections of the heart. Look at those two remarkable periods in our history—the illustrious reign of Elizabeth, and the memorable era of the Commonwealth. Were the giant minds of the

former period dwarfed by their study of theology? On the contrary, they were enriched and enlarged by their knowledge of sacred literature. Their writings owe no small part of their beauty and grandeur to the views and illustrations derived from the sacred oracles. Were Bacon and his illustrious contemporaries men of an inferior type, and of small range of thought? They stand out in vast dimensions in the history of the world, overtopping their fellows like Saul among the people. When we descend to the period of the Commonwealth, the same grand phenomenon arrests our attention. The men of highest mark, conspicuous for grasp of intellect and extent of reading, were deeply conversant with theological questions and the Word of God. The opulence and activity of mind distinguishing that period is wonderful. The truth of God made them think as well as feel. Milton is the principal star in a brilliant constellation of gifted men, whose souls were set on fire by the Divine splendours of the glorious Gospel.

But in following this course, let us beware of falling into the common error of depreciating general science and literature. Scientific men are sometimes repelled from the study of the Christian religion by the narrow-minded jealousy and clamour of some of its misguided professors. What is meant for the defence of the Gospel recoils upon the

heads of its injudicious advocates, and brings unmerited discredit upon the Christian cause. Revealed truth has nothing to fear from the researches of philosophy and the discoveries of science. It will be a gainer, not a loser, by the progress of knowledge. The book of nature was written by the same Divine hand to which we owe the book of inspiration; and the contents of the one, when properly understood and interpreted, will invariably be found to accord with the other. It were to betray a want of confidence in the Bible as the inspired gift of God, to shut our ears to conclusive reasoning, to close our eyes to indubitable evidence, and lay an illiberal arrest on the progress of science, lest the foundations of our faith should be shaken. Our religion cannot be shaken and overthrown, if it is from God, as we believe it to be; and therefore science will only act as its handmaid and torch-bearer, by illustrating its truth, and throwing additional light upon its evidence. Let new light stream down from suns and systems in the stellar regions above, and new facts be gathered from the mines of geology below, not a discovery will be made to dim the lustre of one jewel in the crown of the Redeemer. Nature and revelation, when their voice is really heard, with one mind and one mouth will glorify God. Let us not be faithless, but believing. Even in the hands of its enemies, Divine truth will vindicate its origin,

as the ark of God in the hands of the Philistines bore with it a solemn testimony that Jehovah will defend and vindicate His own.

But how, it may be asked, can we, whose influence is so small, contribute to so immense a work as the progress of society? We are apt to be bewildered by its vastness, as if at a loss to decide what particular branch we should select for our operations, and hopeless as to our help being of any avail in moving a machine so ponderous and unwieldy. We feel ourselves in the position of a person who enters a large and magnificent library, containing a vast collection of books on all departments of knowledge. If seated with a few authors of the first eminence before us, we should lose little time in suspense as to which of them we would make choice of, but would at once address ourselves to the task of perusal. But lost amid the conflicting and rival claims of so gorgeous an assemblage of counsellors, we allow our allotted time to pass without doing more than glancing at the title-pages of a few, and gazing upon the imposing exterior of the venerable assembly. So as if spell-bound by the extent and magnitude of the object before them, many allow the best part of life to glide away before deciding upon any course of duty with regard to the improvement and happiness of mankind. "What can *I* do? Where shall I begin? My influence is but as the dust in the

balance; what am I among so many?" are a specimen of the remarks and excuses that betray a spirit reluctant to exercise the functions of a benefactor even at the eleventh hour.

A field of usefulness is open to every man in the sphere in which Providence has placed him, if he will not despise the day of small things. The noblest and most lasting works are slow in development, and it is by small and gradual accessions that they reach their crowning perfection. The sturdy and majestic oak is much slower in attaining to maturity than the willow by the watercourses. Man, the flower of creation upon earth, is later in arriving at the maturity of his powers than the lower animals. Were our progress very rapid, it would be superficial, and want solidity. This slow but safe improvement we may all promote. Much may be done by each doing a little. See how the various wants of a great metropolis are supplied, by persons in different branches of business sending their produce to market. In this way every want is provided for, and the most fastidious taste gratified. In erecting the social edifice there are various departments of labour. Some are hewers of wood, and drawers of water; some square and fashion the stones for their places in the building; and others attend to the more ornamental parts. But every workman who performs his allotted task helps forward the building.

When a Spartan boy complained that his sword was too short, his mother replied, "Put a step to it." So if our sword is short, our means small, let us augment them by faithfulness and zeal; let us lengthen our instruments by adding to them fortitude and faith and activity, and we shall find that they are sufficient to reach the heart of some of those evils that poison the springs of social life, and debase and impoverish not a few of those who embark in the world with generous sentiments and sanguine hopes. Let each of us do what we can, and do it in faith, and our labour will not be in vain. Let each strike a chip from the mass of evil, and it will rapidly diminish. Let us not be paralysed by the greatness of the undertaking. When Paul entered Athens, and saw idols and idolaters in every street, he did not abandon his sublime enterprise in despair because he was in the seat of 30,000 gods? The amazing spectacle only inflamed his soul with a holier and more ardent zeal, and rendered him more faithful and devoted. Though we should clear but a small spot in the wilderness it will be a commencement, which those who come after us will enlarge, till the desert be wholly reclaimed.

There is one little field for which we are severally responsible, that demands immediate attention. We have no dangerous sea to cross; no lofty mountain to climb in order to reach it. It lies near

home, and we have access to it whenever we please. That field is our own heart. Is it growing weeds whose seed is wafted into our neighbour's garden? Does an influence flow out of it prejudicial to others? This should not be. We must begin with ourselves if we would benefit others. If our own character is formed upon the true model, our example will shed a salutary influence around us wherever we go, and we shall insensibly leaven others with a similar spirit. No good man lives unto himself; others gain by him without making him a loser; and though he may never attract public admiration, quietly and unobtrusively he goes about doing good.

One can hardly look without pain and apprehension at the dense mass of ignorance and wretchedness lying at the base of society. There disease and crime fester, to the danger of the community at large; and inflammable materials are accumulating which a spark may kindle. The best legal enactments, and the most vigilant police, provide no remedy for such a deep-seated, growing evil. The strong man is blind and in chains, but his strength is increasing, and he broods over real as well as imaginary wrongs, and in his rage, while the gay are amusing themselves, he may tear up the pillars of the constitution, and produce a scene of wide-spread ruin and woe. The only radical cure is knowledge and pure religion. The ignorant

and abandoned must be conquered by the power of light and love. Brought under the influence of truth and moral discipline, many would ascend from the pestilential region of licentiousness and crime to a position of self-control and honourable cultivation of mind, and would form the strength instead of the weakness of the nation. That state of society is pregnant with danger, which has refinement and splendour glittering at one extremity, while brutal ignorance and squalid misery are fermenting in dark putrefaction at the other. If Britain fall, she will fall by the hands of her own children. The fatal blow will come from no foreign hand. The doomed are first infatuated. Internal decay invites and prepares the way for external invasion. Our strength lies in more impregnable walls than our wooden ones. We have to do with a God, who would have spared Sodom had ten righteous men been found in it. Our Aarons and our Hurs are our true bulwarks, and will hold up the hands of our lawgivers when the hour of peril comes. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and protects it too. We can each add something to this glorious buttress of true liberty and greatness. Let us not think of painting over what is rotten at heart, but as wisdom hewed out her seven pillars, so let our pillars be sound and solid as the rock. Every class of society should be pervaded with love to God and love to man, with

the knowledge that understands the obligations of duty, and the spirit that conscientiously addresses itself to the discharge of it as a labour of love. Let us go hopefully to work, and act as stewards of him who went about doing good, and, sooner than we think, the sublime spectacle of society, in all its gradations, impregnated with a spirit of social brotherhood and confidence, may greet our eyes. The bare hills of Palestine were once fertile to their very tops; in regular terraces the soil rose from the valley below, and the watchful hand of art guided the refreshing stream through every smiling plot, so that the whole scene waved with blooming luxuriance. Let each of us trim a small terrace, and let a little streamlet of fertilizing influence into some neglected spot of society; and from the lowest base to the very crown we shall see barrenness changed into fruitfulness, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

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